An Afterlife for the Khan

In honor of beloved Virgil—

"O degli altri poeti onore e lume . . ."

—Dante, *Inferno*

An Afterlife for the Khan

*Muslims, Buddhists, and Sacred Kingship
in Mongol Iran and Eurasia*

———

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For Smadar, Noga, and Amitai

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improved by the comments of the peer reviewers. Needless to say, all mistakes are my responsibility alone.

Finally, this book would not have been possible without the support of my family: Robert, Marcia, Daniel, Ewan, Gideon, Malka, Hadass, Uri, Itamar, Yaara and Ze'ela. Amitai and Noga have constantly reminded me my real priorities and have patiently (more or less) endured my absent-mindedness accepting this book as their third sibling. My partner Smadar is everything. She not only inspired me to do better but has patiently listened to my incoherent rambling at all hours of the day and shared her insights. Her help has made this process so much more bearable. I cannot imagine doing this without her.

Tel Aviv, July 2022

Through most of the book, I have listed only the Gregorian dates (AD). When deemed significant, Hijri dates (AH) were included as well. In the bibliography, works published in Iran follow the solar (shamsi) Hijri calendar (SH).

I followed the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* guidelines for Arabic and Persian. For the sake of readability, diacritics were omitted from the running text in the case of personal names, place names, and key terms (such as Sahib Qiran, Qadi, Hanafi, etc.), though hamza (ʾ) and ʿayn (ʿ) were retained throughout. Full diacritic marks appear in the footnotes and bibliography for author names and book titles. Personal names and titles were usually rendered according to the primary language (Persian or Arabic) employed by the author or in the text or according to the more common usage (for example, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* and not *al-tavārīkh*). Mongolian names and terms are transliterated according to Antoine Mostaert's scheme (modified by F. W. Cleaves), with a few modifications: č has been rendered as *ch*; š as *sh*; γ as *gh*; and ǰ as *j*. *Kh* appears as *q*, except for the word *khan* (instead of *qan*) and its derivatives. The form *Qaʾan*, however, was retained. In general, some Mongol names and terms appear in their Turkicized form, in accordance with their more common appearance in the sources (e.g., *yarligh*, not *jarligh*).

I use English terms whenever possible. Translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

Introduction

In 1254, after a long and anxious wait at the Mongol Empire's capital of Qaraqorum, the Flemish friar and missionary William of Rubruck (ca. 1220–ca. 1293), finally got his wish to preach in person to the Mongol Qaʾan Möngke (r. 1251–59). Before meeting the emperor, however, there was one final obstacle to overcome: outperforming his Muslim and Buddhist contenders in an interreligious debate. This multilateral court disputation was the first documented debate of its kind that included Christians (both Catholics and Nestorians), Muslims, and Buddhists.[1] For William and for the Catholic Church more broadly, the encounter with Buddhism was entirely new. For the Muslim debaters, it was by no means the first interaction with Buddhists: Islam and Buddhism had a prolonged history of religious, intellectual, and commercial encounters and exchanges, but one that was fraught with friction and rivalry as well.[2]

From our historical hindsight, however, this 1254 exchange in Mongolia can be seen as marking a new page in Muslim-Buddhist relations, not in the eastern territories of the Mongol Empire (China and Mongolia), but rather further west, at the other end of Mongol-dominated Eurasia, in Iran, which would shortly become the seat of the independent Mongol state of the Ilkhanate (1260–1335). Established by Chinggis Khan's (r. 1206–27) grandson, Hülegü (r. 1260–65) in Iran, Iraq, and Azerbaijan—areas with a predominantly Muslim population—the Ilkhanate would become a destination for Buddhist monks from across Eurasia. These Buddhist experts would travel great distances to spread the Dharma and take advantage of the opportunities of patronage that the new Mongol rulers of Iran, the Ilkhans, offered.

In the late 1280s, some thirty years after William's visit to Qaraqorum, the Ilkhanid court in Iran experienced the height of interfaith exchanges. Learned

monks gathered at the court of Buddhist enthusiast Ilkhan Arghun (r. 1284–91), and debated with Muslims and possibly others. It is against this backdrop that this book's protagonist, Rashid al-Din (d. 1318), then still a court physician and an up-and-coming bureaucrat, found himself embroiled in a disputation with one of the Mongol king's cherished monks.

Rashid al-Din describes his exchange in a treatise written nearly two decades after the event, and under very different circumstances. He was at the height of his tenure as vizier, the most powerful civil servant in the Ilkhanid state, and Islam had already prevailed over Buddhism to become the official religion of the Ilkhanid rulers. Rashid al-Din does not name his contender and refers to him only as a bakhshī, Buddhist priest.[3] The Buddhist asked Rashid al-Din the following question in Arghun's presence: "What came first, the bird or the egg?"[4] Rashid al-Din notes that this was a "famous fable" among the Buddhists. The monk indeed evoked a well-known Buddhist enigma that appeared in the "Questions of Mellinda," a Pali dialogue between a Buddhist sage and the Greek king Menander of Bactria, probably composed between 150 BC and 100 AD.[5] Rashid al-Din writes that while the monk believed that he would fail to solve the riddle, he was confounded by it for only a moment before God divulged to him the answer. He does not tell us what answer he ended up providing nor whether the Buddhist offered a rebuttal. Instead, Rashid al-Din downplays his Buddhist rival, dismissing the monk as ignorant of the true meaning of his own riddle. Yet he does not disregard the question itself as a catalyst of a theological inquiry. Rashid al-Din is "inspired" by it, and in the remainder of this treatise, he proceeds to contemplate Islamic philosophical points regarding issues such as the createdness of Adam and the divine source of primordial human knowledge.

Rashid al-Din's account of this debate certainly differs from the Flemish friar William's report to the Pope about his multilateral debate at Möngke's court in Mongolia. For one, William provides more detail about how the debate with the Chinese Buddhist representative evolved and about the type of arguments that each party employed. We know they debated the existence and unity of God and the cause of evil. The differences between the Persian Muslim's and the Flemish Christian's accounts notwithstanding, there are also striking parallels between the two. Both downplay the intellectual fortitude of their Buddhist opponents. And both emphasize their recourse to their own scholastic traditions of rational argumentation to overcome the challenges mounted by their Buddhist contenders, rather than relying on Muslim or Christian scriptures (see further chapter 1).[6] Whereas both might have underscored cultural and linguistic disparities, whether explicitly or implicitly, their accounts ultimately give the impression of a common vocabulary—that of rational argumentation.

Scholastic disputation indeed emerges from their reports as a shared currency enabling a certain exchange of ideas. Yet how far did such exchanges go? William's

account suggests that the debates went beyond the exchange of riddles and parables and could include hefty theological arguments. It also gives the impression, however, that the two parties remained ingrained in their own scholastic traditions. Rashid al-Din's account, on the other hand, leaves more to the imagination. He gives the impression that few meaningful intellectual exchanges between Muslims and Buddhists took place under Mongol rule in Iran. And this impression is amplified by the general dearth of Muslim Ilkhanid descriptions of such exchanges, as well as the complete absence of any Buddhist textual documentation from the Ilkhanate.

Yet it is hard to reconcile this impression with what we know of the prevalence of Buddhism and the flourishing of the Buddhists during the Ilkhanate's first four decades (see further below). As this book shows, a thorough examination of the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din's extensive theological works demonstrates that Buddhist, Muslim, and Mongol exchanges have left deeper and more consequential impressions than the silence of contemporaneous Muslim authors implies. Muslims at the court were exposed to and made a considerable effort to respond to Buddhist concepts. These might not have been the finer points of the Dharma, but rather, as we will see, Buddhist methods of engaging with political authorities and conversion strategies.

An Afterlife for the Khan explores the Ilkhanid court of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century as an arena of interreligious exchange and rivalry, where the conceptual differences and equivalences between various Eurasian structures of power and sacrality—Islamic, Buddhist, and Mongol—were debated and deployed. It unearths the various subtle ways in which cultural and religious agents employed their religious and political resources to accommodate, translate, manipulate, and subvert the symbols and structures of the religious Other.

Focusing on the theological-philosophical works of a Persian Muslim vizier active in the intellectual scene of the Ilkhanid court at the turn of the fourteenth century, *An Afterlife for the Khan* shows how the Persian-Muslim experience of Buddhism and its system of karmic-righteous kingship, on the one hand, and the accommodation of and resistance to the Mongol model of divinized kingship, on the other, generated and informed processes of creative experimentation in new modes of Islamic sacral kingship. Buddhists marketed concepts and models of karmic kingship as means of translating, reaffirming, and converting their Chinggisid patrons' claims to deified kingship. The Islamic challenge entailed, therefore, not only winning their Ilkhanid patrons to the Muslim faith or cementing their commitment to Islam in the case of the Mongols who had already converted, but also uprooting their previous Buddhist education.

Jewish convert, Persian vizier, historian, and Muslim theologian Rashid al-Din stood at the center of the Muslim conversion efforts. In his theological and historical writings, invigorated by the lively atmosphere of an intellectually rigorous and religiously competitive royal court, Rashid al-Din not only engaged in the

translation and assimilation of Buddhist narratives and concepts, or painstakingly attempted to dispute and disprove the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation. He was also inspired and informed by his Buddhist competitors and their strategies of conversion and domestication of the Chinggisid rulers. To this end, he experimented with a model of Mongol-Muslim kingship that paralleled Buddhism's structure of karmic-righteous rulership.

This book argues that Rashid al-Din's Buddhist- and Mongol-informed experimentation in Islamic theological discourses formed a crucial, intermediate stage between the two more dominant frameworks for legitimizing Islamic, sultanic authority—the pre-Mongol phase of a restrictive, legalistic, and genealogical-based caliphal structure, and the post-Mongol independent model of universal and sacral Islamic rulership buttressed by saintly and messianic discourses. The Mongol occupation of Baghdad and the consequent elimination of the ʿAbbasid caliphate in 1258 represented a dramatic event that shattered the religiopolitical foundation of the Sunni majority's world.[7] This cataclysm inaugurated an era of unprecedented constitutional crisis that exacerbated after the collapse of the Ilkhanid state in 1335.[8] In subsequent centuries, new strategies for legitimizing sultanic authority were formulated to resolve this crisis. To that end, Muslim intellectuals increasingly made use of and elaborated on an innovative, comprehensive, and compelling vocabulary of sovereignty that effectively shifted the discourse of sultanic legitimacy away from the pre-Mongol restrictive genealogical and juridical parameters of Sunni authority. In its place, there emerged a new discursive realm of universal Islamic kingship that referenced and interlinked a variety of intellectual fields—from philosophy and theology to astrology, mysticism, and the occult.[9] Rashid al-Din's works marked the end of caliphal authority and the beginning of this new age of Islamic authority. In the remainder of this introduction, we first explore the central theoretical foundation of this research into sacred kingship and the strategies of religious agents with the Mongol rulers. Subsequently, we provide two short historical overviews—on Rashid al-Din and on the Buddhist "moment" of Ilkhanid Iran. We end the introduction with a brief outline of the book's chapters.

MONGOL SACRED KINGSHIP

By the end of Chinggis Khan's life (d. 1227), or under his son Ögödei (r. 1229–41), a coherent, albeit succinctly articulated, message about the legitimacy of the Mongol emperors as universal rulers was forged and propagated, grounded in Chinggis Khan's exceptional affinity with Tenggeri (Eternal Heaven), the supreme sky deity of Inner Asian traditions.[10] The Chinggisid affinity with Heaven was commonly expressed in the following Mongolian formula, found with relatively little variation in the Mongols' ultimatums: "By the might of Eternal Heaven; by the good fortune of the Qaʾan [Great Khan]."[11] This formula revolved around two main legit-

imizing assertions that also had deep roots in the imperial legacies of the Eurasian steppe.[12] First, the claim that Eternal Heaven selected Chinggis Khan and conferred on him its blessing and protection—hence his exclusive mandate to universal conquest and domination. Second, Chinggis Khan was in possession of a special good fortune (*suu* in Mongolian, *qut* in Turkish), which further confirmed his identity as Heaven's chosen ruler and predestined his success as the fortunate universal emperor. Furthermore, the Chinggisids advocated for a heavenly lineage through the miraculous impregnation of Chinggis Khan's mythical ancestress Alan Qo'a (see chapter 5 below).[13]

Potential Chinggisid successors and reigning khans were expected to demonstrate their personal, merit-based qualification for the position,[14] as well as empirical validation that they were in possession of Tenggeri's favor.[15] They were also required to cultivate their relationship with the imperial founder, so that Heaven's blessing would continue flowing to the Chinggisids and, by extension, to the polities they ruled.[16] Chinggisid princes and khans had several ways to maintain and solidify their relationship with Chinggis Khan, including claiming privileged descent within the Chinggisid lineage,[17] cultivating the ritualized reverence of Chinggis Khan and the family's ancestral cult,[18] and imitating the divine-like traits attributed to the imperial founder. These were malleable and subject to reinterpretation, yet they seem to have generally entailed Chinggis Khan's supramundane intelligence, and "sense of right" and premonition, or intuitive, divine knowledge, attained through his personal communion with Heaven.[19]

From the perspective of the sociology of religion, the Mongols endorsed a deified or immanentist model of sacral kingship. "Religion" as a whole can be seen as consisting of two contrasting tendencies toward transcendentalism and immanentism. These two terms can be assigned to specific characteristics within most (transcendentalist) religions or to religions in their entirety. What best defines transcendentalist religions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and philosophical Hinduism is their orientation around individual salvation and universal ethics. These religions are institutionalized via scriptural canons and formal doctrines. They entail hierarchical clerical ranks, whose members claim higher moral authority thanks to their ability to decipher the textual cannon and thus the tradition's soteriological promise.

Unlike their transcendentalist counterparts, immanentist religions—variously referred to as tribal, traditional, temple, cosmotheistic, or archaic—are primarily concerned with harnessing supernatural or other forces in the here and the now: healing the sick or securing fertility, abundance, and victory over the community's enemies. While transcendentalist religions are committed to "particular all-important truth claims which are held to be superior to rival" religions, immanentist traditions are interested in the proven, empirically observable efficacy of rites, gods, and clerisies.[20]

Notably, transcendentalism and immanentism are ideal types, rather than historical realities. Religions, societies, devotional movements, and ritual forms have exhibited varied syntheses of the two.[21] Despite the obvious risk involved in applying such broad categories, they enable us to tease out certain processes that are otherwise left unearthed. As this book shows, employing this theoretical framework helps us to better comprehend the changes that Mongol Islamization entailed and to identify the chief obstacles that bearers of Islam experienced in their efforts.

Alan Strathern demonstrates that this conceptual division is further aligned with two opposing modes of sacralizing kingship: the divinized and the righteous. Immanentist societies deify kings through their affinity with the gods. Conversely, in transcendentalist religions, kings are endorsed by a religious hierarchy as righteous "guardians of a system of truth-ethics-salvation." In this scheme, kings must negotiate for a sacralized status with a clergy that draws its authority from the same moral sphere.[22] *An Afterlife for the Khan* explores how Buddhists and Muslims sought to resolve the tensions between these two distinct modes of sacralizing kingship by deploying their religious-cultural resources and ingenuity to assimilate and subvert their Chinggisid patrons' sacred symbols of divinized, immanentist rulership. The book proposes that the Mongols' interfaith court debates, where religious interlocutors attempted to persuade or outshine their religious contenders, were also where Muslims and Buddhists made concentrated efforts to domesticate and transform their Chinggisid patrons' patterns of sacral authority.

INTERFAITH COURT DEBATES AND THE LOGIC OF EMPIRICAL RELIGIOSITY

The Mongols' immanentist religiosity was central to their conception of empire, divinized rule, their attitude toward the religions of the conquered populations, and the significance of interfaith court debates and contests. Like followers of other immanentist traditions, the Mongols, too, were partial to observable demonstrations of power and spiritual force. Their pattern of "empirical religiosity"[23] infused all levels of Mongol society's ritual activity—from domestic cultic practices (including ancestral veneration, offerings to the spirits inhabiting the universe, and the observation of taboos) to the functions of the ritual expert, the shaman, in maintaining and promoting communal well-being.[24]

The Mongols also viewed other religious traditions through this same prism of cultic efficacy: they evaluated other religions' power holders—humans or metapersons—according to their empirically proven spiritual potency. They were, therefore, keen on arranging and attending martial, sportive, intellectual, and supernatural contests. These events ranged from intellectual "duels" and religious debates to wrestling matches and other spectacles. These court contests had several functions. They facilitated knowledge and intelligence acquisition and were a

forum for educating and entertaining the ruler and his milieu.[25] Moreover, they offered a venue for the public display of the prestigious talent and human spoils assembled by and for the sake of the emperor.[26] Finally, they enabled the ruling Mongol elite to empirically compare and assess the skills of individuals or in the case of scriptural experts and holy men, to determine their efficacious supernatural powers that could involve healing, divination, magic, or more "intellectual" performances. Success in these "tests" moreover indicated the heavenly support of the ritual specialists and the religions and metapersons they represented.[27]

While these court contests were mostly arranged at the behest of the khans, participation in them was also desirable for religious agents. Successful performances could determine the ability to negotiate access to the ruling elite, and through them gain sought-after political and material support. Furthermore, Mongol inclinations might have prompted the religious interlocutors to explicitly address and highlight in their performances the political implications and the potential empirical pertinency of their religions for Chinggisid causes. However, the participants also brought with them a different perspective on their participation in these interfaith competitions. They considered their religious contenders to represent competing truth claims that had to be disputed, dismantled, and eradicated. Indeed, in contrast to the Mongol rulers' expectations or wishes, interlocutors often came to the debates better prepared to tackle their competitors on an intellectual basis rather than based on their performance of superior supernatural force. Still, these interlocutors seem to have also viewed the interfaith debate as a valuable opportunity for introducing their Mongol patrons to their scholastic traditions, and for inducting them into a discourse of truth claims, rational argumentation, and scripture—all of which informed a transcendentalist-salvific mindset. In other words, not only did the ruling Mongol elite and the participants have very different expectations of the interfaith debate, but religious contenders attempted to go beyond proving their skills or divine support by introducing their own religious logic.

This transcendentalist mindset furthermore undermined the empirical rationale that drove the khans' interest in hosting intellectual duels and interfaith debates. This was especially significant since, as this book demonstrates, court debates and intellectual audiences with the ruler had an additional role from a Mongol perspective. They also functioned as a forum for the religiously and ideologically charged performance of the Chinggisid rulers' divinized kingship and their intuitive, divine-like knowledge. The interfaith debates and similar settings, therefore, were also used by the religious parties to attempt to convert and domesticate the Chinggisids' immanentist pattern of kingship.

Historians have examined the interreligious debate at the Mongol courts in the context of the expectations and efforts of their religious participants to convert the khans, or the way such conversions, real or fictitious, were narrated and remembered.[28] This book shows that religious interlocutors indeed attempted to transform

their performance in the debates into an exercise in ruler conversion, but also that the target for religious change were not simply the rulers themselves but the Mongols' mode of religiosity, more broadly.

While a variety of religious experts participated in the court contests, the Mongols' own ritual experts, the shamans, were a major exception to the religions represented in the debates. Although one Syriac Christian author claimed that Buddhist influence over the Mongols grew only after the Chinese Buddhists defeated the shamans (*kamaye*) in a debate arranged by Chinggis Khan,[29] there are no reliable indications that the shamans were ever made to participate in debates with transcendentalist representatives. The shamans formed a community of experts separate from other religious representatives: they were never listed alongside the non-Mongolian tax-exempted clergy.[30]

MUSLIM AND BUDDHIST STRATEGIES OF PERSUASION

During the second half of the thirteenth century, the united Mongol Empire broke up into four separate regional empires or khanates, centered in Iran (the Ilkhanate), China (Yuan dynasty), Central Asia (Chaghadaids) and the Volga region (Jochids). They were ruled by contending and sometimes mutually hostile branches of Chinggis Khan's progeny. This political fragmentation further facilitated the expansion of the world religions, with each of the four khanates gradually embracing a new religion. Acculturation and assimilation within the local elites of the conquered population and the interest in gaining its political support played a role in motivating ruler conversion, but so did other factors, such as internal succession conflicts, the need to buttress the ruler's claim to independence from the other khanates, and promises of supernatural support made by converters.[31] While the Mongols were known for their religious impartiality, expressed, for example, in their tax exemptions for the clergy, specific rulers or households were also supportive of or were affiliated with certain creeds, an affiliation that could be ideologically and politically motivated. Overall, Islam and, to a lesser extent, Buddhism had the greatest success with the Mongol elites.

This book explores some key strategies employed by Buddhists and Muslims to jostle for influence over the Ilkhans and to persuade them to convert or to strengthen their earlier commitment to the new religious community.[32] Transcendentalist and immanentist religions exhibit varied approaches to religious difference. Whereas transcendentalist traditions establish clear boundaries between religions and cultivate elaborate mechanisms for disputing and denying competing truth claims,[33] immanentist traditions exhibit a pattern of religious inclusiveness, or at least they do not concern themselves with refuting religious truths. They have no concept of mission or conversion. Instead of a dichotomy of truth
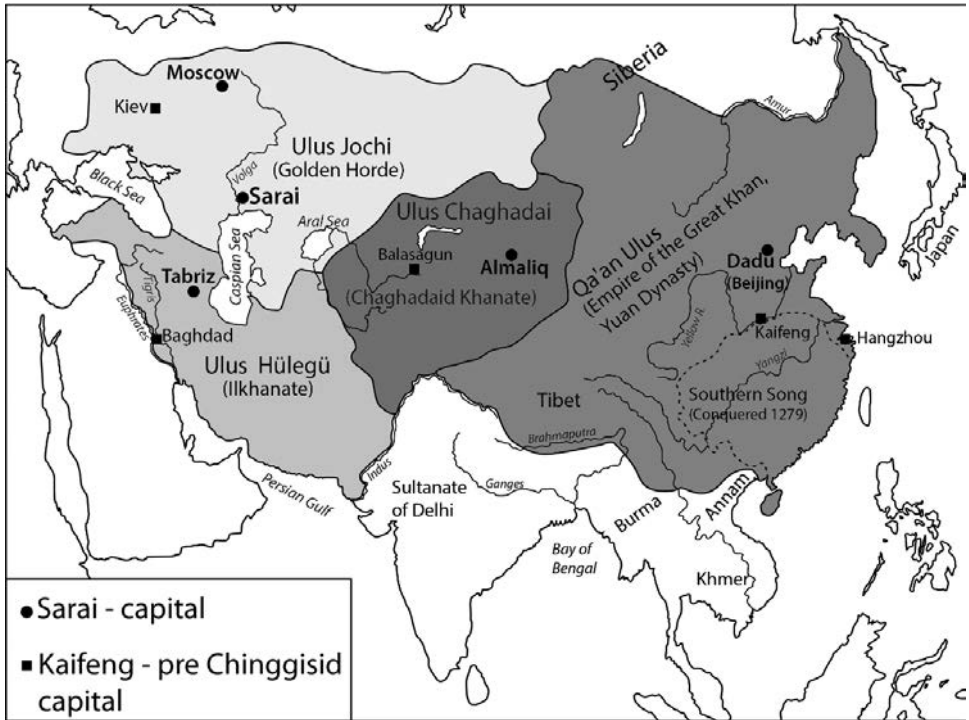
MAP 1. "The Mongol Commonwealth": The Four *Uluses,* ca. 1290 (originally published in Biran, Brack, and Fiaschetti 2020, 13).

versus falsehood, immanentist traditions employ purity taboos. While they socially differentiate between "our cult" and "other cults," they have no difficulty in identifying equivalences and parallels between their own pantheons and those of others.[34]

Mongol religiosity was also imbued with a sense of intercultic transparency. In their ultimatums that warned of the dire results of resistance to Mongol occupation, Eternal Heaven, Tenggeri, is translated as Deus, Allah, Khuda or Tian, depending on the audience.[35] A striking expression of this interreligious translatability is found in the audience of William of Rubruck with the Mongol Qa'an Möngke in 1254. Following William's performance in the multilateral court debate, Möngke advised the friar that the Mongols believed that "just as God has given the hand several fingers, so he has given mankind several paths." Subsequently, Möngke compared the Christians' failure to follow the scriptures that God gave them to the Mongols' own compliance with the instructions of their shamans, or soothsayers, thus appeasing Heaven and guaranteeing its favor.[36]

This "transcendentalist transability" of Tenggeri—and, by extension, also the translatability of the Chinggisid affinity with Tenggeri—might have stemmed from the Mongol cultic system veering toward a form of henotheism as the Mongol Empire expanded and consolidated. Tenggeri did not represent a transcendental, abstract, and ethical heaven in the monotheist sense, but an empirical reality. It was the "totality of celestial systems," rather than a reality transcending the heavenly dome.[37] In other words, Tenggeri's "otherworldliness" did not prevent it "from being immanent in nature."[38] The Chinggisids banked on the universal aspects of immanentism instead. They focused on Tenggeri as an overarching, superior god, and this reflected and reinforced the expansionist ambitions of Chinggis Khan and his successors.[39]

The empire's pluralistic attitude to the religious beliefs and practices of the conquered population also extended from this pattern of intercultic translatability.[40] It was rooted in Inner Asian nomadic traditions that accommodated and encouraged differentiation between religious groups to maintain power broadly distributed among competing elements.[41] However, it also followed an immanentist worldview, according to which violence was not sanctioned on grounds of religious orthodoxy or truth claims, as in the transcendentalist religions.[42]

Medieval authors often reported the appeal that displays of power, magic, or medical skills had for the Mongols, which fits their empirical mode of religiosity. Religious parties indeed sought to take advantage of the appeal of such performances for the Mongols. Yet how could they benefit also from the Mongols' tendency toward interreligious transparency and interest in appropriating local traditions they deemed useful and compatible with their own? Religious interlocutors appear to have employed a threefold approach. This entailed, first, identifying and highlighting affinities, conceptual equivalences, and cognates between the Mongol tradition and certain principles of the new religious framework of the religious representatives.[43] The Buddhists appear to have been particularly successful in emphasizing parallels and conceptual affinities, especially with regard to the Mongols' pluralistic attitude and model of sacral kingship. Yet Muslims, too, tried to establish conceptual affinities—for example, between Islam's claim to religious supremacy and the Mongol claim to universal domination. Religious interlocutors could also use this same tactic to demonstrate that another, competing religion held views inimical to Chinggisid principles and thus weaken their religious opposition. In some instances, Buddhists, for example, cultivated anti-Muslim sentiments by arguing that the Muslim dogma advocated for religious violence and was therefore, unlike Buddhism, adverse to the Chinggisid principle of religious pluralism.[44]

The second stage of this approach entailed demonstrating to the Mongol patrons how the appropriation of new religious concepts, ritual elements, and tools could help reinforce and reaffirm Mongol claims. They presented their tradition's applicability from a Mongol perspective. For example, religious representa-

tives demonstrated that their religious discourses enhanced and buttressed the claims of princely contenders or recently appointed khans to legitimate succession. Finally, religious representatives might use this assimilative and accommodative approach to maneuver within the immanentist paradigm of their nomadic patrons, molding and manipulating it to their own (transcendentalist) ends. For example, among the early modern Mongols, Chinggis Khan and his ritualized cult were assimilated and subsumed into, but also superseded and marginalized by, the Buddhist pantheon.[45]

This pattern of interreligious translatability further facilitated the Mongol interest in appropriating, mobilizing, and even monopolizing the diverse cultural and religious resources of their conquered populations. These also included the vocabularies of rulership and spiritual powers that the Mongols deemed potent and, moreover, compatible with their own conception of the heavenly mandated sacral and universal rulership of the house of Chinggis Khan.[46] Like other immanentist communities, the Mongols, too, welcomed to their "ritual arsenal" immanentist and transcendentalist elements of other cults, adding them to gain additional results.[47] The Mongols, moreover, welcomed such innovations without identifying them as such; they often assumed a continuity with Chinggisid tradition.[48] Religious representatives identified this pattern and marketed the adoption of the new religion not as conversion to a new faith but as reembracing something akin to one's ancestral belief. Thus, Confucians recast Chinggis Khan as a proto-Confucian whose wisdom naturally aligned with Confucian teachings.[49] The Buddhists refashioned the imperial founder into the great universal and cosmic Buddhist king, the Cakravartin (see chapter 3 below), arguing that maintaining the model of Chinggisid rule was equivalent to supporting and protecting the Dharma.[50] Muslims, too, assigned Chinggis Khan the position of a protomonotheist, some even fashioning him into a near-prophetic figure.[51]

Muslim conversion accounts often depict religious transformation as a clearcut, unidirectional process that has an explicit and finite endpoint of unwavering commitment to the new religion. Yet, in the past few decades, scholars have shown that the adoption of a new religion is a gradual and complex process involving ongoing nuanced negotiation, adaptation, and religious reproachment, often with no clearly delineated endpoint in sight. Instead of conversion, historians employ the term *Islamization* to convey this intricate and gradual process.[52] The case of Mongol "conversion" demonstrates this all too well. By applying the term *conversion* to the Mongols' assimilation process, we necessarily assume the proselytizers' perspective of conversion as complete commitment. The Mongols, however, did not deem the adoption of religious affiliation to be an exclusive commitment.[53] They were reluctant to consider their conversion(s) as preventing them from following their own tradition, and selectively borrowing from other religious frameworks.[54] For the religious parties, converting the Mongol rulers entailed, therefore,

not only guaranteeing their affiliation with the new religion and introducing them to new religious rites and doctrines, but also inculcating the Mongols with an altogether different, transcendentalist outlook. This outlook excluded other religious affiliations and instilled intransigence to future conversion or religious "relapse."[55]

RASHID AL-DIN: VIZIER, THEOLOGIAN, DEBATER

This book focuses on the work of Rashid al-Din Fazl Allah Hamadani (d. 1318). He was born to a Jewish family of physicians, which originated from the city of Hamadan in western Iran, home to a thriving Jewish community at the time.[56] We know little about his early life. According to Rashid al-Din, his grandfather Muwaffaq al-Dawla[57] and his offspring were among those released in 1256 by the Mongol forces from the Ismaʿili stronghold of Maymundiz in northern Iran, together with the Shiʿi polymath Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274).[58] Rashid al-Din claims that they were held against their will by the mad Ismaʿili imam. After their safe delivery, Muwaffaq al-Dawla and his children joined Hülegü's service.[59] Rashid al-Din's narrative of his family's release, however, raises some difficulty. It is plausible that Rashid al-Din's grandfather and family had initially sought refuge with the Ismaʿilis owing to the turmoil caused by the Mongol invasions, and that they were later captured by Hülegü's forces with the surrender of Maymundiz.[60] However, this version also suspiciously echoes Tusi's earlier account,[61] and might therefore reflect the vizier's attempt to provide his family with a more glamorous rendition of their initial engagement in the Mongol service, some fifty years after the events in question.

The family settled in Maragha in western Iran, where Tusi established his famous observatory. Under Tusi's management, the observatory and city would become the central intellectual hub in the first few decades of the Ilkhanate. Both Rashid al-Din's grandfather and father, ʿImad al-Dawla, became court physicians,[62] and he likely followed their example.[63] Jewish physicians frequented the court, attending to the Ilkhan and his family, and some even used their proximity to the ruler to gain political influence and lucrative administrative posts.[64] Rashid al-Din gradually rose in prominence, progressing from the practice of medicine at the courts of the Ilkhans Abaqa (r. 1265–82) and Arghun (r. 1284–1291) to consulting with chief commanders on the affairs of state, and finally to more formal administrative tasks.[65]

There is little information about the time and circumstances of Rashid al-Din's conversion to Islam.[66] Although he was accused of being a Jew-sympathizer and worse, a heretic or pseudoconvert[67]—charges that he fended off in his theological works—he is vague about his conversion. In one instance, he implies that the fraternization of his father, who remained Jewish,[68] with eminent and pious Muslims,[69] and his own upbringing in their company, nurtured his "natural" inclination toward Islam.[70] In any case, it seems that by the age of thirty (ca. 1277), Rashid

al-Din had already converted.[71] His Jewish past, however, continued to haunt him: one contemporaneous Christian account states that a Jew named Rashid al-Dawla served as a cook for the Ilkhan Geikhatu (r. 1291–95).[72]

Rashid al-Din and his family's long years of faithful service for the Ilkhans paid off when he was assigned governorship of Yazd in northwestern Iran, a city with which he had already developed ties.[73] Yet he did not remain in that position for long. In 1298, he was promoted to a leading administrative position of senior court advisor, sharing the running of the state with vizier Saʿd al-Din Savaji (d. 1312).[74] Savaji and Rashid al-Din had a tense relationship, leading up to Savaji's fall from grace and his *ultimate* in 1312.[75] Rashid al-Din maintained his influential position for nearly two decades, a near-record time for an Ilkhanid vizier, but his tenure was far from uneventful. His two decades in office, which marked the height of his court career and influence, were filled with court intrigues, in which he played the roles both of target and conspirer.[76]

Rashid al-Din's success at court is attributed to his talent as statesman and political player,[77] but also to his profound understanding of Mongol cultural norms and his cultivation of a close and intimate relationship with the Mongol rulers, especially the Ilkhan Öljeitü (r. 1304–16), who was nearly thirty years younger than the vizier when ascending to the throne at the age of twenty-two.[78] Still, Rashid al-Din was not spared the same violent fate that had met his predecessors: in 1318, shortly after Öljeitü's death, he was accused of poisoning the Ilkhan with a laxative, and, together with one of his sons, was executed.[79]

The vizier's scholarly productivity is especially impressive considering his demanding administrative and political responsibilities. Rashid al-Din is primarily known for his world history, the *Compendium of Histories* (*Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*), one of the earliest examples of Islamic world histories and the most important sources for historians of the Mongol Empire.[80] The first volume, *Blessed History of Ghazan* (*Tārīkh-i mubārak-i Ghazānī*), included the history of the Mongols and the Turks from their origins to Chinggis Khan and his successors. It was commissioned by the Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) but was completed only after his death. The second volume, supposedly commissioned by Ghazan's successor Öljeitü, is a world history. It consists of the histories of the pre-Islamic rulers, the Muslims from the Prophet to the end of the ʿAbbasid caliphate, and the "rest of the world": the Oghuz Turks and the Saljuqs, Chinese, Jews, Franks, and India.[81] The two volumes demonstrate Rashid al-Din's remarkable openness to various cultures beyond the scope of Islam. They diverge from earlier, expansive Muslim histories not only in their range of Eurasian histories, but also in their inclusion of the historiographical perspective of the Mongols' subjects as well.[82]

Recent scholarship, however, has demonstrated that Rashid al-Din extensively borrowed from another court historian, Abu al-Qasim ʿAbd Allah Qashani, especially for the second volume of the *Compendium* (the world history). Rashid

al-Din even appropriated the title of Qashani's work, the *Compendium of Histories*.[83] Qashani is well known for his independent history of Öljeitü's reign, in which he notoriously claimed to have been the true author of the *Compendium*. He accused Rashid al-Din of presenting the work as his own and of retaining Öljeitü's very generous financial reward.[84] Rashid al-Din, indeed, used this substantial sum to establish his famous pious foundation in Tabriz, the *Rabʿ-i Rashīdī*, which included the vizier's tomb complex, a hospice, hospital, library, mosques, and a classroom.[85] While modern historians tend to reject Qashani's claim,[86] recent research into unpublished manuscripts written by the latter has demonstrated the extent of Rashid al-Din's reliance on him. Some passages are scarcely altered and the differences are largely stylistic, but in other instances, the vizier has also introduced additional paragraphs and reversed the order of major segments of the history.[87]

Aside from his historical magnum opus, Rashid al-Din was also a prolific author in other fields such as medicine and agriculture. He had a strong interest in recording new information on East Asia, particularly regarding Chinese medicine, agronomy, language, and script. The contacts Rashid al-Din cultivated at the court, and especially his collaboration with the Mongol chancellor (*chingsang*) Bolad (d. 1313), who was Qubilai's (r. 1260–94) envoy and chief consultant to the Ilkhanid rulers, might have served as a conduit for the transfer of information on China and the Mongols to Iran.[88]

Rashid al-Din's treatises on topics related to Islamic theology (*kalām*) and Qur'anic commentaries (*tafsīr*), which he collected into several compilations, are of special interest for us. Written in the decade following Öljeitü's enthronement in 1305 (see table 1),[89] Rashid al-Din's treatises are interlinked with the broader socio-historical context of the Ilkhanid court, where intra- and interfaith debates and intellectual disputations were frequently orchestrated. Many of his treatises begin as answers to questions posed to Rashid al-Din during or following court sessions, or in informal exchanges at the rulers' camps. The questions were presented by Sunni and Shiʿi Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist scholars, as well as by the Ilkhans themselves—first by Ghazan,[90] but mainly by his brother and successor Öljeitü.[91] Like his father Arghun, Öljeitü was keen on hosting intellectual discussions, debates, and interviews.[92] A religious debate between a Hanafi and a Shafiʿi judge over the question of the legal permissibility of intercourse with one's female relatives even featured in the earliest account of Öljeitü's Shiʿi conversion.[93] Öljeitü's conversion to Twelver Shiʿism was the last (or near last) in a series of religious transformations he underwent during his lifetime, preceded by a Christian baptism in his infancy, Buddhist affiliation, and his conversion to Sunni Islam (first in the Hanafi and later in the Shafiʿi school).[94]

Rashid al-Din describes in detail the Majlis sessions held every Friday at Öljeitü's court. These were salon-like social gatherings held at court or in an audi-

ence of a patron, covering a range of topics—from literary and poetic duels to legal disputes.[95] Öljeitü would invite experts on Qurʾanic exegesis and hadith (traditions), theology and the rational sciences (*maʿqūlāt*), and would question them while drinking and feasting.[96] Interviews and debates were also held at more ad hoc locations, when the ruler's mobile court would set camp at a new site. Local scholars were summoned; if their performance was successful, they were rewarded. Rashid al-Din presents himself as one of Öljeitü's prized disputers in these debates.[97] He reports also informal conversations during which the Ilkhan would test him on various topics. In one instance, Rashid al-Din animatedly describes a surprise audience he received from Öljeitü outside his residence at a late evening hour. Öljeitü asked him to read out the draft he was working on and then questioned him on its contents.[98]

The vizier's experiences testify to the important role these intellectual exchanges and formal and informal audiences with the ruler had in both establishing one's intellectual authority in public and in fostering intimacy between the khan and his servants.[99] Impressing the king during such exchanges demonstrated an individual's value and loyalty, which could reward him with the ruler's ear. Rashid al-Din depicts himself as the sole individual able to answer Öljeitü's brilliant inquiries. He and other Ilkhanid historians compared Rashid al-Din and Öljeitü's relationship to the intimate relationship between the Sasanian monarch Anushiravan and his philosopher-vizier Buzurgmihr.[100] The paradigmatic Buzurgmihr, too, was credited with being the sole individual able to answer Anushiravan's challenging queries and insightful questions, in contrast to the monarch's ignorant ministers.

RASHID AL-DIN'S THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL COLLECTIONS

Works in the Rashidi Collection (Majmūʿa Rashīdiyya)

1. Book of Clarifications (Kitāb al-tawżīḥāt) (1305/705 AH)
2. Key to the Commentaries (Miftāḥ al-tafāsīr) (1307/707 AH)
3. Book of the Sultan (Kitāb al-sulṭāniyya) (1307/706 AH)
4. Subtle Truths (Laṭāʾif al-ḥaqāʾiq) (after 1308/708 AH)

Theological collections not included in the Rashidi Collection

1. Explanation of Truths (Bayān al-ḥaqāʾiq) (1309–11/709–10 AH)
2. Questions and Answers (al-Asʾila wa-l-ajwiba) (ca. 1312/712 AH)

Rashid al-Din's theological and philosophical treatises were embedded in the broader intellectual developments in the eastern Islamic world, specifically the thirteenth-century reconciliation of Islamic theology with Greek-derived philosophy and logic. A gradual rapprochement between the two took place from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries,[101] beginning with the Muslim theologian and

mystic Ghazali (1058–1111), if not earlier, during Avicenna's lifetime (d. 1037). This reconciliation proceeded mainly through the critical engagement and Islamic naturalization of aspects of Avicenna's philosophical thought as well as of Aristotelian logic. This process was prevalent especially in the eastern, Saljuq-ruled and Persian-speaking domains of the Islamic world.[102] The increasing assimilation of Greek philosophical reasoning and methods of rational demonstration into Islamic theology culminated in the redefinition of kalam in the fourteenth century as "religious philosophy."[103]

A significant milestone in this process are the works of twelfth-century Ashʿarite theologian and exegetist Fakhr al-Din Razi (d. 1210), who infused his studies on kalam with Avicennan philosophical concepts.[104] Razi also employed this theological-philosophical synthesis to import philosophical methods and terms into Qurʾanic exegesis and thus unite Greek-inspired "reason" and the Islamic scriptural canon.[105] Active mainly in Islamic centers of learning in the Persianate East (Marv, Maragha, Ray, and Herat), Razi authored nearly a hundred works on a wide variety of subjects and had considerable influence on the postclassical Islamic tradition (ca. 1200–1900).

Razi's philosophical commentaries impacted the trajectories of Islamic philosophy and theology by honing and refining the Avicennan method of "verification" (*taḥqīq*).[106] Razi constructed his own "critical dialectical method of enquiry" in opposition to what he identified as philosophical and theological "dogmatism and partisanship"—that is, uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*).[107] His influence, especially of his more philosophically oriented works, on the formation of this new kalam reached its zenith in the century following his death. It was especially felt in the vibrant intellectual scenes of the Mongol-supported Maragha observatory headed by Shiʿi polymath Nasir al-Din Tusi, and the thriving Ilkhanid Tabriz.[108] Under Ilkhanid rule, his influence transgressed sectarian and confessional boundaries, inviting the responses of Jewish and Syriac Christian authors as well.[109] His works further shaped the interreligious polemics and apologetics of the thirteenth century.[110] These in turn facilitated the composition of some of the earliest Islamic disputation manuals, all of which were authored in the Ilkhanate,[111] serving as the foundation for a new discipline of disputation.[112]

The intellectual engagement with Razi's oeuvre flourished in court-sponsored intellectual centers of the Ilkhanate during Rashid al-Din's tenure. Eminent scholars with deep links to the court, such as Ashʿarite theologian ʿAdud al-Din Iji (d. 1355)[113] and Imami jurist and theologian ʿAllama Hilli (1250–1325),[114] fervently engaged and responded to Razi's writings. The two were in fact appointed as elite scholars of the Ilkhan Öljeitü's "mobile school" (chapter 5).

Rashid al-Din's theological-philosophical works reflect his aspiration to situate himself in the midst of this vibrant intellectual tradition.[115] He prided himself as a self-trained theologian,[116] claiming to be on a par with the great Ashʿarite theolo-

gians and Mujaddids (centennial renewers) Ghazali and Razi.[117] Rashid al-Din also relied extensively on Razi's reformulation of an Avicennized kalam and innovatively experimented, moreover, with Razi's appropriation of Avicennan principles for an expansive theory of a hierarchy of ethical-intellectual perfection as the basis for a new political theology of Islamic sacral kingship (chapters 3 and 4).[118]

As we will see, Rashid al-Din drew on Razi's model of human perfection for some of the same reasons that later Eurasian imperial courts used Ibn ʿArabi's (d. 1240) doctrines of spiritual government and the oneness of being. Both Razi's theological reformulation of Avicennan philosophy and Ibn ʿArabi's Neoplatonist philosophical mysticism and cosmology presented attractive hierarchical divisions of humankind and the cosmos that supported the accommodation of immanentist elements in divine transcendence.[119] They offered compelling frameworks through which intellectuals and literati in imperial service could accommodate and elaborate sultanic pretensions to sacral power.[120] Rashid al-Din's political experimentation with Razi's theological model, however, was certainly more restrictive in comparison to the free-ranging utilization of elements of Ibn ʿArabi's hagiology and ontological monism in Timurid and early modern imperial courts. Still, Rashid al-Din's theological treatises importantly set the stage for much of the later experiments with new vocabularies of sultanic rule that would become a defining feature of the early modern era.[121]

Rashid al-Din also envisioned himself as following Razi's footsteps in his efforts to demonstrate the congruency of scripture and reason (ʿaql).[122] He presented this project as a pressing concern for the Muslims at the Ilkhan's court, especially when it came to polemics and disputations with Jews, Christians, and Buddhists.[123] In these treatises, Islam became the supreme manifestation of reason. Conversion to Islam constituted, therefore, the most rational (and equally salvific) choice for any individual. According to Rashid al-Din, the fact that the famous Baghdadi Jewish philosopher Ibn Kammuna (d. after 1284) did not convert to Islam proved not only that he was bound to be in hell but also that he certainly was not the most rational individual of his age, despite being the most knowledgeable scholar.[124]

Possibly the most politically powerful theologian in the history of the Persianate domains, if not in the premodern Islamic world simply, Rashid al-Din made great efforts to have his writings copied and distributed. He had them translated into Arabic shortly after their completion in Persian, and even left clear instructions about how they should be copied and proofread and about how they should be taught in his principal foundations in Tabriz and elsewhere in the Ilkhanate.[125]

Insecure in his own position as a theologian and scholar, Rashid al-Din solicited and then included in his *Book of Clarifications* (*Kitāb al-tawżīḥāt*) endorsements (*taqrīẓāt*) for his exegesis of the Qurʾan from about ninety of the most prestigious religious scholars and intellectuals of the Ilkhanate. And while we might

question the extent to which they had properly scrutinized the work, we must conclude that the list serves nevertheless as an important indication that it was read by the vizier's contemporaries.[126]

In 1309, Rashid al-Din assembled his first four theological collections in Persian into one compilation titled *Rashidi Collection* (*Majmūʿa Rashīdiyya*). The 1311 Arabic translation of the collection was even larger as it included all his writings in a single volume, the *Collected Writings of Rashid* (*Jāmiʿ al-taṣānīf Rashīdī*).[127] This, however, might have had adverse consequences. It made the prospect of copying the entire voluminous collection, in addition to the author's subsequent works, a painstaking and expensive task, reserved for royal patrons with ample resources.[128] Indeed, while a few copies were also made in the fifteenth century, the bulk of surviving manuscripts were made during his lifetime as a result of his "self-publication" venture.[129] While Rashid al-Din's theological-philosophical works had limited circulation, they were highly prized: they were collected and retained in the close-knit circles of the post-Mongol imperial courts.[130]

Several aspects of Rashid al-Din's theological-philosophical discourses also set them apart from other theological works. First, the vizier wrote his treatises in Persian when Arabic was the dominant, even exclusive, theological-philosophical language of the time. Second, his treatises were interlaced with Persian (and Arabic) poetry,[131] fables, metaphors, and mythical-historical references that are mostly absent from the traditional styles of theological and philosophical composition. Furthermore, theological and philosophical works were characterized by parsimonious presentations that were elitist in nature, meant to be read and understood only by the initiated few, rather than to appeal to the uninitiated. While Rashid al-Din also engaged with the more obscure theological terms, his treatises showed a distinct tendency toward accessibility, even entertainment, at the expense of using specialized terminologies. As a result, he used terminology inconsistently. Rashid al-Din commented that he would write in haste, and that his work had somewhat of an "associative" nature.[132]

Rashid al-Din wrote with a mind to audiences beyond traditional, limited, scholarly circles.[133] He elaborated and accentuated the political applicability of some theological-philosophical ideas in communicating and reaffirming models of authority and legitimacy, giving the impression on occasion that his chief audience is the Mongol rulers themselves. As we will see throughout this book, Rashid al-Din saw the field of theology as an experimental space of dialogue between Islam and nomadic, Mongol traditions. Moreover, he gives the impression that he was not alone in viewing his work more as a conversation between the two worldviews.

An Afterlife for the Khan explores several dialogues between Rashid al-Din and his royal patrons, especially Ilkhan Öljeitü. Naturally, we cannot ascertain whether these conversations actually took place, were a figment of the vizier's imagination, or were a mixture of both. Rather than taking them at face value or discarding

them altogether as fiction, this book suggests that Öljeitü's statements and questions during these audiences indicate a pattern of thought, a worldview, that we can identify as strongly immanentist and as fitting the Mongols' cultural and religious patterns more broadly. Accordingly, the "dialogues" between the vizier and his Chinggisid patron are studied here as reflecting a broader pattern of Muslim-Mongol interactions and negotiations at the Ilkhanid court.

Part of this Mongol "worldview" was the rulers' active role in the vizier's compositions. According to the vizier, Öljeitü would regularly show interest in his writings, indicating that he viewed them more as a shared enterprise than the work of a single author. Öljeitü would have Rashid al-Din read his treatises aloud, thereafter raising new questions and making comments and observations. On occasion, Öljeitü ordered him to add his corrections and comments, and had the work returned to him later for inspection.[134] In other instances, we get the impression that Öljeitü even considered himself the vizier's partner in authorship. This is apparent in the case of *Book of the Sultan* (*Kitāb-i sulṭāniyya*), which originated in a wager between two parties, one of which only consisted of Rashid al-Din and the Mongol sultan.[135] Each group had to provide its own answers to Öljeitü's questions, and the best answer granted the victors an honorary robe, provided by the losing party. The title of the work, *Book of the Sultan*, conveys the ruler's supposed authorship or "ownership" of this treatise, although it was Rashid al-Din's labor that went into producing their shared response.[136]

THE BUDDHIST ILKHANATE

The Buddhist efflorescence in Iran began in earnest with the Ilkhanate's founder Hülegü (r. 1260–65), who was an avid supporter of Buddhism, especially its Tibetan schools.[137] He built a lavish temple in Labnasagut, near his summer residence in the Ala-Tay Mountains in Armenia, and in Khoi, southern Azerbaijan. The Labnasagut temple consisted of a thriving monastic community that worshipped the Buddha Shakyamuni and the future Buddha Maitreya. Armenian historian Kirakos Ganjakec'i (1203–71) remarked on Hülegü's "misinformed" devotion to the yellow-cloaked, head-shaven Buddhist priests (*toyins*), who allegedly lured him with their sorcery and promises of immortality.[138]

Buddhist temples were also founded in the royal Ilkhanid residences such as the Ilkhan Abaqa's (r. 1265–82) famous Takht-i Sulayman. Other sites were possibly located in caves and villages near Maragha and in Ilkhan Arghun's favorite summer camp, Qonqur Ölöng ("the prairie grounds of the Alezans"), in northwestern Iran, near where the city of Sultaniyya and the mausoleum of Arghun's son Öljeitü would later be built.[139] Owing to the financial and political support of Hülegü and his descendants, a corridor of Buddhist shrines extended between the region south of the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, along the trade routes that led from Iran
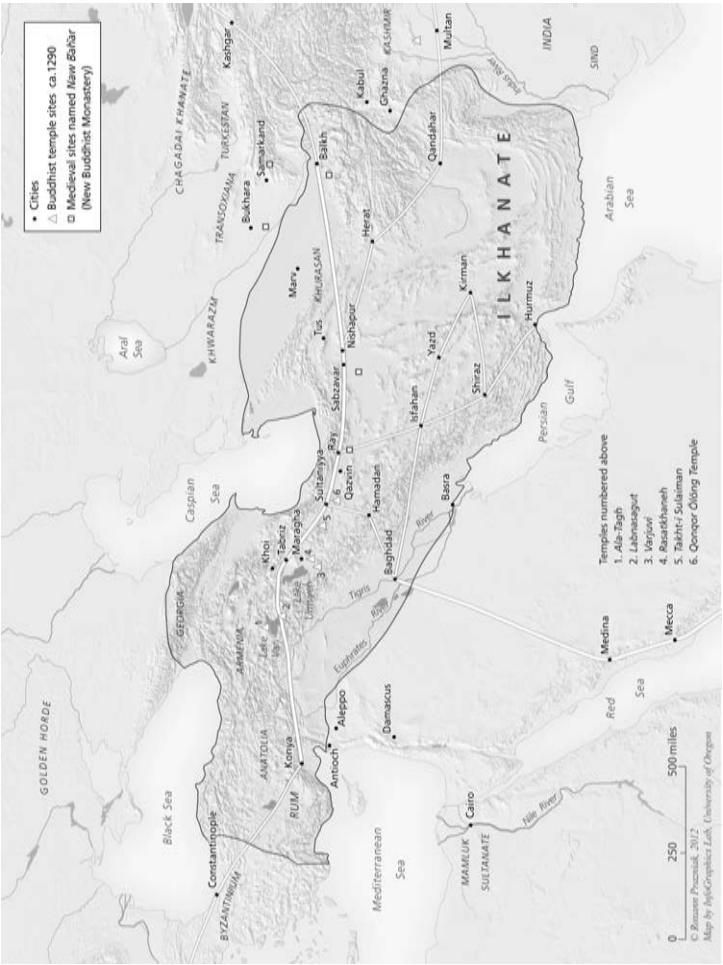
MAP 2. Potential Buddhist Sites in the Ilkhanate. Courtesy of Roxann Prazniak (originally published in Prazniak 2014, 653).

FIGURE 1. Dash Kasan (Qonqur Ölöng) rock-cut site (near Sultaniyya and the village of Viyar), suspected to have also functioned as a Buddhist site. Photo courtesy of Golriz Farshi.

FIGURE 2. Dash Kasan (Qonqur Ölöng): a framed, large, Chinese-style dragon relief carved to the western wall between two mihrabs. Photo courtesy of Golriz Farshi.

to Azerbaijan and to eastern Anatolia.[140] The geographical spread of Buddhist monasteries and temples further speaks to the significance of Buddhist presence for the Hülegüid dynastic project: monastic complexes were especially prevalent near sites frequented by the Ilkhans' peripatetic camps, and elaborate, portable, Buddhist temple tents also traveled along with the *ordu,* the imperial court.[141]

The Ilkhans' generous royal support provided incentives for Buddhist scholars—Tibetans, Kashmiris, Indians, and Uyghurs—to travel and visit the court in Iran. This influx of monks and practitioners formed the basis for the emergent Ilkhanid Buddhist community, an eclectic group representing diverse Buddhist backgrounds, though it seems to have been mostly comprised, at least initially, of Uyghur and Central Asian Turkic Buddhists.[142] This diverse Buddhist group was not devoid of internal tensions. Buddhists from diverse traditions and locations competed with each other over royal patronage and did not refrain from ridiculing and criticizing their religious peers at court.[143]

In Yuan China, the Tibetan Sakya Buddhist priests gained Qubilai's support with their claims to magical powers channeled through the cult of the Tibetan deity of Mahakala.[144] From the Chinggisid perspective, one of the main appeals of the Tibetan Tantra was that it united "otherworldly transcendence and this-worldly power, in such an intimate and potent way."[145] The Ilkhans in Iran were also attracted to the Buddhist monks because of their expertise in Indian or Tibetan medicine and Tantric magic.[146] Arghun, for example, showed a strong interest in attracting Buddhist medical practitioners, mainly Indians (and possibly also Kashmiris) to his court. One of them is alleged to have lured the Ilkhan with life-extending concoctions and promises of immortality that hastened the ruler's demise instead.[147]

Muslim physicians thus encountered Buddhist medical practices at court, even when these practices did not meet their approval.[148] Another central arena of interreligious encounters was the interfaith court debate where Muslims and Buddhists were made to entertain the ruler, pique his intellectual curiosity, and contribute to his royal prestige (above). Arghun was especially keen on orchestrating such intellectual contests in his camp at Qonqur Ölöng.[149] In addition to having the debate itself, Muslims and Buddhists occasionally formed ad hoc political alliances at court,[150] and even engaged in personal contacts that extended beyond it.[151]

The favorable conditions for Buddhism continued under Arghun's successors. His son Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) was initially supportive of Buddhist monastic centers and built his own temple in Khabushan (Khurasan), where he participated in Buddhist rites.[152] Ghazan's patronage of the Buddhists was rooted in his upbringing. His grandfather Abaqa had assigned Ghazan a Chinese Buddhist tutor named Yaruq.[153] That Abaqa's personal care for Ghazan's Buddhist education is noted in Rashid al-Din's history composed after the ruler's conversion underscores the important role of the royal patronage of Buddhism as a marker of dynastic continuity and legitimacy, even after the court's conversion to Islam.

Internal succession struggles and the crisis of legitimacy that Arghun and his offspring experienced increased the significance of the Buddhists' royal support. Arghun, who usurped the throne from his Muslim uncle Ahmad Tegüder (r. 1282–84), lacked dynastic seniority. His reign and those of his successors—his brother Geikhatu and son Ghazan—were challenged by the more senior cousins of the other, collateral branches.[154] This internal dynastic challenge was fully resolved only two decades later, with the enthronement of Öljeitü and following several purges of the Hülegüid contenders and their supporters.[155]

Hülegü's example of supporting the Buddhist schools presented an opportunity for Arghun and his offspring to establish alternative, nongenealogical avenues to claim continuity with the Hülegüid and Chinggisid tradition. Furthermore, the Buddhists integrated and assimilated their patrons' ancestor veneration with Buddhist worship, thus reinforcing the link between Chinggisid dynastic legitimation and Buddhism (see chapter 5 below). Finally, patronage of Buddhism also aligned the Ilkhans with their allies in the east, the Yuan Mongol rulers of China. Participation in Buddhist, especially Tantric rites, might have served to consolidate the Ilkhans' alliance with their Toluid cousins (descendants of Chinggis Khan's youngest son Tolui) against their mutual rivals, especially the non-Toluid branches of the Chaghadaids and Ögödeids in Central Asia.[156]

The linkage between dynastic legitimation and Buddhism, which worked to the advantage of the Buddhists, was ultimately also a reason for Buddhism's downfall in Ilkhanid Iran. In contrast to Yuan China and Mongolia, where Buddhism flourished, Buddhism never quite established itself in the eastern Islamic world. It existed only through the auspices of the Hülegüid house;[157] and once the court's religious allegiance shifted from Buddhism to Islam, its presence in the Ilkhanate faltered as well. Ghazan's conversion to Islam—which was likely motivated by interdynastic strife and his wish to gain the support of certain pro-Muslim Mongol commanders[158]—and his subsequent succession to the throne (in 1295) mark, therefore, the end of this period of Buddhist ascendancy in Iran.[159] Ghazan implemented a series of Islamization policies throughout the realm, and he is reported to have ordered Buddhist monasteries to be ransacked and destroyed.[160] While it seems likely that the violence perpetrated against the Buddhists and their sanctuaries was short-lived,[161] and that Buddhism maintained some presence in the following decade, the Ilkhanid court was no longer a prized destination for Buddhist scholars from across Mongol-dominated Eurasia.

By the first decade of the fourteenth century, Buddhist monks were largely absent from the court. Yet this did not mean that Buddhism lost its influence with the Ilkhans. The previous Buddhist education and inculcation of Ghazan, Öljeitü and the Ilkhanid royal household left enduring traces.[162] While the Buddhist presence in the Ilkhanate might have centered more on the expertise of the visiting monks in medicine, divination, spiritual protection, and even government, and

less on its scholastic traditions and religious doctrines,[163] we must not disregard the training of the Ilkhanid princes in Buddhist logic and teachings; nor can we ignore Buddhist support for Mongol claims to Chinggisid exceptionalism. As this book shows, the Ilkhanid rulers' Buddhist upbringing made them not only more receptive to certain Buddhist-inspired ideals of kingship; it appears also to have informed their conception of the intellectual exchanges in their audience. As documented by the vizier, questions Öljeitü posed to Rashid al-Din appear modeled on the riddle-style Buddhist dialogues. Rashid al-Din's writings suggest that the Buddhist background of his Mongol patrons presented an obstacle, but also an opportunity. The Buddhists charted a path for Muslims seeking to consolidate their Mongol patrons' commitment to Islam.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 examines the section on Buddhism in the chapter on the "History of India, Sind and Kashmir" (*History of India*) in Rashid al-Din's *Compendium*. I raise new questions about the authorship of this text and Rashid al-Din's supposedly Buddhist informants. The chapter focuses on two contrasting presentations of the Buddha: on the one hand, the Buddha is a monotheist-like prophet who "demotes" India's gods to inferior, angelic ranks; on the other, Buddhism is the source of Arabian polytheism. I show how these representations engage in dialogue with Buddhist and Muslim methods of hierarchal assimilation and subordination of their respective religious others. Finally, I argue that Rashid al-Din's view of the Buddhists differs from earlier Muslim views of them as deniers of reason, in that he considers them rational thinkers who can be proven wrong only by using rational theology, kalam.

Chapter 2 examines Rashid al-Din's arguments against the Buddhist belief in reincarnation in his discussion of a set of theological-philosophical problems. While Rashid al-Din relies on earlier Muslim intellectuals who were largely informed by Greek philosophers, he does not address the Buddhist doctrine of the transmigration of souls to engage in an "internal" Muslim debate about Islam's Greek heritage. Rather, he appropriates and refashions this line of argument to specifically respond to the Buddhist challenge of reincarnation, and therewith also to the Buddhists' merit-based system of kingship. The chapter further shows how Rashid al-Din put great effort into crafting an appealing afterlife and death experience for his Chinggisid patrons.

Chapter 3 explores how Buddhists and Muslims in Mongol service sought to employ their own political-religious concepts to accommodate and translate their Chinggisid patrons' model of divinized kingship—specifically, the notion of their immanentist good fortune. This process of translation of the Chinggisid sacral kingship also entailed its reconceptualization, conversion, and domestication,

replacing the khans' immanentist model of sacral kingship with a more constrained, Muslim or Buddhist, transcendentalist mode of righteous monarchy. The chapter emphasizes parallels between the Buddhists' approach of reframing Chinggisid kingship within Buddhism's moral-karmic framework and Rashid al-Din's experimentation with refashioning his Ilkhanid patrons as sacral Muslim monarchs of a new type. Specifically, I compare the Buddhist model of universal karmic kingship (the Cakravartin) and the vizier's fashioning of an Islamic sacral monarchy centered on his theological reinterpretation of the title Sahib Qiran, Lord of Auspicious Conjunction.

Chapter 4 examines how Rashid al-Din fashions the image of his Mongol patron as a sultanic simulacrum of the Prophet Muhammad. The vizier charts Öljeitü's supreme position within a system of kingship that ontologically parallels Muhammad's position as the Seal of Prophethood in the theologian Fakhr al-Din Razi's hierarchical model of intellectual-moral perfection. By imbuing the sultan with the Prophet's attributes, the vizier underscores the subordinate place of this new rank of sacral kingship relative to Muhammad's prophethood. Rashid al-Din furthermore uses the Mujaddid tradition to depict Öljeitü as a reformer king, integrating his rule within a sacral-ethical Perso-Islamic timeline.

Chapter 5 takes us from religious polemics between Muslims and Buddhists to the sectarian, Sunni-Shiʿi conflict, and from the refutation of Buddhist relics to the question of Muslim shrine veneration. Rashid al-Din's views on ancestor worship were informed by the central role it played in the Mongol system of divinized kingship. The vizier strove to situate this tenet of Chinggisid sacral authority in relation to Islam's salvific imperative and practices of grave visitation. The chapter explores how the utilization of discourses on shrine visitation to ethicize the Mongols' ancestral veneration related to the renovations in Öljeitü's monumental tomb in Sultaniyya and its transformation into a site of cultic veneration. The vizier's rationalization of shrine veneration is further considered in light of his attempts to navigate the shifting sectarian landscape of the Ilkhanid court in the context of Öljeitü's conversion to Shiʿism in 1309. Finally, the chapter examines the role of the Ilkhanid Islamization of Chinggisid ancestor veneration in the evolution of shrine-centered kingship in dialogue with the cult of saints. In the book's epilogue, I consider the "afterlives" of the Mongol system of sacral kingship and the institution of the court debate in the early modern imperial courts that succeeded the Mongols, especially the Mughal dynasty in India. I demonstrate that the Mongols' mode of religiosity had an enduring impact on Eurasian imperial polities.

Indian Prophet or Father of Arabian Paganism?

The Buddha and the Buddhists in the History of India

Buddhism was not entirely a newcomer when it first arrived at the doorsteps of the Islamic world under Mongol auspices. Eastern Iran had been a center of Buddhist activity, mainly in the second and third centuries AD. After the expansion of the Islamic world during the seventh century, Muslims continued to encounter Buddhism through the ruins that dotted the area, and especially through the Indian Buddhists' contribution to the Arabic translation of Sanskrit medical texts in ninth-century cosmopolitan Baghdad.[1] Yet the period of Indian influences was short. From the ninth century onward, the distance between the Islamic and Indian worlds grew considerably.[2]

This new reality meant that Islamic knowledge of the current state of the Buddhist world remained rather stagnant. A "frozen" image of Buddhism emerged and was crystalized in Islamic scholarship, while Buddhist communities and traditions were undergoing considerable change across Asia.[3] By the eleventh century, Muslim contacts with real-life Buddhists became rare. Famous Central Asian scholar Biruni (d. 1048), indeed, lamented that he was unable to find a single Buddhist informant with whom to consult on the Buddhist doctrine.[4]

With the establishment of the Ilkhanate during the 1260s, the distance between the Muslim and Buddhist worlds shrank almost overnight. The influx of Buddhist monks from across Eurasia into the eastern Islamic world provided opportunities for the exchange of knowledge. While Muslim authors generally chose to ignore the presence of the newcomers, the encounter with the Buddhists at the Ilkhanid court provided us with one of the most elaborate and accurate medieval descriptions of Buddhism, included in the chapter on the *History of India, Sind, and Kashmir* in Rashid al-Din's *Compendium of Histories.*

With remarkable illustrations of scenes from the Buddha's life and oriental scenery scattered throughout its lavishly copied manuscript renditions,[5] along with detailed descriptions of the Buddha's career and creed, the *History of India* has long captivated scholars of Islam and Buddhism alike.[6] The first part presents the geography, royal history, and mythical past of India and Kashmir, while the second is devoted to India's religious landscape, focusing almost exclusively on Buddhism. Aside from a few exceptional cases such as the Buddha's alleged achievement of nirvana in a domelike structure of pure crystal,[7] the three foci of this account of Buddhism—the Buddha's biography, the Wheel of Life, and the worship of the Buddha Maitreya—offer an accurate depiction of Buddhist beliefs.[8]

A full account of this complex, multilayered text is beyond our scope. Instead, this chapter starts by raising new questions about the authorship of the text and its Buddhist informants. These questions explain why the *History of India* cannot be seen simply as a profile of Buddhism as practiced in the Ilkhanate, but rather as a multilayered work that reflects the extensive geographical and social mobility enabled by Mongol rule in Eurasia. In what follows, I explore two divergent and contrasting images of the Buddha and Buddhism in the *History of India.* On the one hand, the Buddha is depicted as a monotheist prophet and ascribed the position of Islam's "proxy" in the Indic religious landscape, while India's gods are "demoted" from their divine status to an inferior, angelic rank. On the other hand, Buddhism is presented as the source of Arabian polytheism and Meccan idol worship. I show how these representations are in dialogue with the Buddhist and Muslim strategies regarding the hierarchal assimilation and subordination of their respective religious others, as well as speak to historical religious changes in the Ilkhanate—namely, the Mongol ruler Ghazan's adoption of Islam. Finally, I ask about the extent to which this new encounter at the Ilkhanid court changed Muslim perceptions of the Buddhists. I draw attention to one of Rashid al-Din's refutations of reincarnation, suggesting how his view of the Buddhists differs from earlier views prevalent among Muslim theologians and intellectuals. Instead of casting the Buddhists as the deniers of reason, Rashid al-Din presents the Buddhists as rational thinkers who can be bested only through the successful deployment of the tools of rational theology.

RASHID AL-DIN'S BUDDHIST INFORMANTS

Historians suggest that what enabled Rashid al-Din to compose an accurate and informed description of Buddhism was his access to real-life Buddhists at the Ilkhanid court. He appears to confirm this impression in his second refutation of reincarnation (see chapter 2), where he expresses his appreciation of the Buddhist informants with whom he has conversed while engaging in research for the *Compendium.*[9] However, the *History of India* names only one Buddhist informant, a Kashmiri (or Indian) monk named Kamalashri. Except for the first five sections

that draw largely on Biruni's *Book of India*,[10] Kamalashri appears to be the vizier's main source on the history of India, and notably, on Buddhist dogma.[11] Nevertheless, Rashid al-Din provides only a few details about his source; we are told merely that Kamalashri "was born and bred in Kashmir and is knowledgeable in the *nom* [*nūm*], which is the book of Shakyamuni" (on the *nom,* see below).[12]

There are several problems with identifying this Buddhist monk and the sources of the *History of India* more broadly. First, Kamalashri's name does not appear other than in this chapter, whether in the *Compendium* or in any other Ilkhanid account. Second, Rashid al-Din's authorship of the *Compendium*'s second volume, which includes the *History of India,* has recently been called into question. As described in the introduction to this book, the vizier has used the work of another Ilkhanid court author named Qashani.[13] His *History* appears indeed to be a close reproduction of Qashani's chapter on India.[14] Yet in the introduction to Qashani's version, there is no mention of Kamalashri's role as Rashid al-Din's informant. Instead, Kamalashri appears as a Buddhist specialist assigned to lead a team of monks "from among all the scholars and wise men of Hindustan." The Ilkhan Ghazan has handpicked them for their in-depth knowledge of Indian history, tasking them with composing this history.[15] Qashani's version challenges the long-held assumption about Rashid al-Din's relationship with Kamalashri. Yet it sheds little light on the Buddhist expert's identity.

The diverse prolife of Buddhism in the *History of India* further complicates the attempt to reach a decisive conclusion about Kamalashri's identity and origins. In the *History,* we find specific traditions that point toward Sanskrit Nikaya, including close translations of Sanskrit sutras,[16] but also to Chinese Mahayana Buddhism.[17] Furthermore, the chapter also evinces some effort to bridge the gap between Sanskrit and Chinese (or Uyghur) terms for deities.[18] While the Chinese influence appears to be solid, note that practices associated with Chinese Buddhism, such as the worship of Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, were also prevalent among Uyghur Buddhists during this period. Some of them, such as the worship of the Big Dipper, were also popular among Mongol court circles in Yuan China.[19]

Scholars have further identified in the *History of India* distinct phrases associated with Central Asian Buddhism.[20] Finally, in addition to traces of Sanskrit, Chinese, Uyghur, and Central Asian traditions, there are also traces of Buddhist Tibetan influences in the chapter.[21] Included among these instances of Tibetan influence are the chapter's presentation of the Tibetan Tantric Path (Vajrayana) as the superior Buddhist method,[22] and the mention of Sukhavati (Pure Land),[23] and a book titled *Qashūrdī*, a possible reference to the Tibetan Kanjur.[24]

This mixture of traditions in the *History of India* seems to point to orality's role in the transmission of Buddhist traditions, making the differentiation of supposedly distinct traditions mostly futile.[25] Yet, considering all of the above, it is also possible that some of the sections attributed to Kamalashri in the chapter on India

originated *outside* the Ilkhanate, perhaps even at the Yuan court. Indeed, scholars have already begun searching for Kamalashri in Yuan China.[26] We know of at least one major Kashmiri Buddhist authority who visited the Yuan capital Dadu, where he interacted and cooperated with Chinese, Tibetan, and Uyghur experts and translators on a major comparative intellectual Buddhist endeavor. His name, however, was Vimalashri.[27]

Keeping these unresolved questions regarding the authorship and circumstances of the chapter's composition in mind, I suggest we read the *History of India* not as a reflection of the Buddhist mélange of Ilkhanid Iran, as it has been often regarded, but instead as a multilayered work that reflects the extensive geosocial mobility characteristic of Mongol Eurasia. The unique conditions of Mongol rule enabled Buddhist experts to crisscross Eurasia, promoting the reintegration of Buddhism's geographically fragmented traditions.[28] Thus, I argue for a palimpsestic reading of the *Compendium,* premised not on a "stable 'original' against which to measure fidelity" or on uncovering a distinct authorial intention but on translation as a "dynamic (and to some extent contingent) process of transformation."[29]

BUDDHA AS PROPHET

One of the most striking aspects of the *History of India* is its abundant use of Islamic terminology to explain Buddhist ideas, highlighting commonalities and epistemic equivalences between the two religions. The Buddha's spiritual advancement is described using Sufi terminology: nirvana is envisioned as the Sufi mystic's self-annihilation in the divine, and the Buddha's disciples are ascribed with the Sufi term *murīd*.[30] The Buddhist demon Mara is presented as the Muslim devil Iblīs. The *History of India*'s generous use of Islamic terms has led scholars to suggest that the chapter's author(s) deliberately attempted to create a palatable presentation of Buddhism for a Muslim readership.[31] In some instances—such as the Buddha's depiction as the ultimate ascetic whom even the devil's beautiful *ḥūrī*-like daughters fail to seduce[32]—the chapter certainly draws on earlier Muslim strands that have assimilated and domesticated the Buddha's story.[33] In other examples, overlapping Buddhist and Muslim sacred geographies facilitate equivalences. Thus, we are told that Shakyamuni is known by the followers of other religions as Adam, "and his footprint is imprinted into the stone on the mountain of Sarandib."[34] The tradition about Adam's Fall at Sarandib is common in early Muslim historiography.[35]

The chapter's efforts to establish an "agreeable" presentation of Buddhism from an Islamic perspective are especially evident in the Buddha's depiction as a prophet sent to the Indians to deliver his revelation.[36] In that regard, the *History of India* follows earlier histories seeking to demonstrate the universality of the Islamic salvific narrative. Muslim authors such as Yaʿqubi (d. after 905) and Masʿudi (d. 956) rely on the Qur'anic assertion that no community was left without

prophetic guidance,[37] and they seek to identify such unknown prophets through local traditions and mythical histories, especially since the Qurʾan emphasizes the prophet's role as a founder of the community.

Muslim historians expanded their imageries to India as well, charting the historical salvific paths of its different communities. They sought to establish the extent to which these communities accepted or (more likely) failed to embrace the divine plan as presented in their prophetic revelation.[38] Authors, accordingly, identified the Buddha as a messenger prophet, but also noted that some of the Buddhists believed him to be an angel, a demon, and even a god.[39] The philosopher Shahrastani (d. 1153), who rejected Buddhism as a false religion, suggested nevertheless that, based on the Buddhist descriptions of the Buddha, he was best compared to Khizr, an elusive figure in Islamic traditions, identified alternately as a prophet, a saint, and an angel. He was said to possess esoteric knowledge and the secrets of immortality, and miracle working, furthermore, was attributed to him.[40]

The second part of the *History of India,*[41] which focuses on Buddhism, begins with a short introduction to India's religious landscape.[42] This introduction categorizes the Indian religious community (ʾumma) into six "metasects," from which other Indian schools of thought had branched out.[43] These larger religious groups are identified interchangeably as religions, religious doctrines (*madhhadb*), or legal schools. Each is matched with its own founder figure, referred to as the head of a legal school or as a prophet (*payghambar, nabī*). The six founders are Shiva (Maheshvara), Vishnu, and Brahma, as well as Arhanta, Nastika, and the Buddha Shakyamuni. This makes for an uneven and confusing list. First, the names of two individuals refer not to historical or mythical "founders" but to fictional characters: Arhanta, whose name seems to derive from the plural of the Sanskrit *arhat,* a Jain sage; and Nastika, who, according to the chapter, founded a sect that rejects the Vedas and believes in some form of religious nihilism.[44]

Second, although Sanskrit doxographies commonly speak of six Indian schools of philosophy,[45] the six founders in the *History of India* include three Indian gods— the "trinity" of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma—as well as the founders of two religions, Jainism and Buddhism. One additional group includes those who reject the Vedas altogether. Different types of affiliations and devotional communities are thus muddled together to create this seemingly orderly account of the Indic religious landscape. There is, however, a certain logic in grouping together and comparing at least some of these founder figures, especially Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma, since their followers have shared forms of devotion and pilgrimage, as well as common Sanskrit narrative traditions.[46]

The *History of India,* in any case, enumerates the laws and beliefs of each Indian "religion," with Buddhism as the culmination of this taxonomy. The "religions" are further divided into two groups according to their object of devotion: idol or fire worship. The account of Buddhism in the *History* thus initially appears to be more

in line with Muslim taxonomical approaches to Indian religions that emphasize differences between Muslims and other communities based on their objects of devotion, leading to their exclusion from salvation.[47]

Overall, however, Rashid al-Din's account of Buddhism relies on the universalizing tendency of Islamic histories more than on theological taxonomies of exclusion. This is especially apparent in his elaborate and impressive presentation of the Buddha as a monotheistic prophet, which exceeds any previous Muslim account of Buddhism. It includes all the chief criteria for prophecy in the Muslim tradition. The first is the mediation of divine guidance through revelation in the form of a book or scripture, and/or through the intermediacy of angels. The second is a historical pattern of successive prophetic revelations, where each revelation is in turn corrupted by the followers, requiring a new prophet to be sent to the community. Another feature predominant in the chapter is the Buddha's miracle performance. Finally, the chapter also relates to the question of the (non)finality of Buddhist prophecy.

Some of these aspects are also aligned with Buddhist traditions. In the introduction to the Buddhist section, Shakyamuni is presented as the most recent prophet (*mutaʾkhkhir*) whose path (*sunna*) and example believers must follow. We learn the names and details of previous Buddhas, specifically the six enlightened Buddhas who have predated Shakyamuni in our current age (the Badra Kalpa).[48] Each Buddha appears after the believers have failed to follow, and have thereby corrupted, the mission of his predecessor. The introduction paraphrases the words of Kamalashri to reaffirm this: the Buddhist message is one and the same, and the Buddhist prophets "arrive once every so and so years to renew their religion."[49] This presentation also reflects Buddhist cosmology: every time the people go astray, abandoning and neglecting the words of the Buddha, the world falls into decay and violence. Subsequently, a new Buddha emerges to teach them the Dharma all over again.[50] *The Explanation of the Knowable* a Tibetan Buddhist guidebook composed in 1278 in Mongol-ruled Yuan China for Qubilai Qaʾan's second son, Prince Jin-gim, offers a version of this Buddhist cosmology: "Perfect Buddhas [Sambuddha]" are the saviors who appear when the world experiences karmic decline.[51]

Scripture is another major criterion of Muslim prophetic taxonomies, but historically Buddhism had never met it.[52] The *History*, however, takes an extra measure in this regard, referring to two such "books." In the introduction to the account of Buddhism in the *History*, we learn that the "*Abhidharma* book" is the Buddhists' revelatory text. The *Abhidharma*, however, was not even a collection of the Buddha's words but rather a compilation of exegeses on his teachings.[53] Another term that approximates Islamic scripture in the chapter is *nom.* In the general introduction to the *History*, we find that Kamalashri "is knowledgeable in the *nom* [*nūm*], which is the book of Shakyamuni."[54] Derived from Greek, *nom* is the Uyghur-Mongolian term used for "law" or "book." In the Mongol Empire, it was also used to render the Sanskrit *dharma* and the Tibetan *chos,* and furthermore, became the

Mongolian designation of "religion."[55] Although no such book likely existed, the idea that the Buddhists had a text called *nom* was prevalent among Ilkhanid authors by the early fourteenth century. The historian Juvayni stated that "the *toyins* [Buddhists] call a reading from their book *nom*," and that "the *nom* is their theological speculations [*maʿqūlāt-i kalām*] and contains idle stories and tradition."[56] The Sufi Shaykh Simnani also associated the Buddhists with the *nom,* stating that the Buddhists believed it contained the words of God Himself, a "Buddhist Revelation."[57]

Another important challenge for accepting the Buddha as a prophet was the issue of the finality of prophecy with Muhammad and his abrogation of all previous revelations—a core principle of Muslim dogma. While the *History of India* established the superiority of the Buddha Shakyamuni's mission at the end of this successive chain of seven prophets, it refrained from implying the finality of the Buddhist prophetic cycles with him. It left room for a Buddhist "renewer"—the anticipated Buddha Maitreya—to appear after the corruption and decline of Shakyamuni's revelation. The continuity of Buddhist mission was substantiated by Shakyamuni himself in the section on Maitreya, where it is stated:

> Like I, Shakyamuni, had foretold the signs of Maitreya, so too Maitreya will proceed to give the signs of the wise and the prophet who would follow him; he will know his name as well as describe his praiseworthy traits; he will say the same words as I have spoken.[58]

Note that Rashid al-Din strongly advocated for the finality of prophecy with Muhammad in his theological treatises (see chapter 4). Similarly, he emphasized that in the case of Judaism, Musa (Moses) had never claimed to be the Israelites' final prophet. On the contrary, he believed the Israelites would continue to sin, which would require new prophets. Thus, Rashid al-Din suggested that Musa proved Judaism's deficiency and imperfection in anticipating the arrival of a reformer and perfecter (*mutammim va-mukammil*) –Muhammad.[59] Like Musa, Shakyamuni himself admits to Buddhism's non-finality, confirming thereby the universality and supersessionism of Muhammad's revelation.[60]

INDIAN DEITIES AS ANGELS

The *History of India* promotes and prioritizes the Buddhist perspective over that of other Indic religious communities.[61] In the first part of the *History,* this perspective is brought forth in several interpolations, some attributed directly to Kamalashri's teachings, reflecting the Buddhist interpretation of India's mythical past.[62] In the second part of the chapter, the description of Buddhism, we find a Buddhist "assault" on the Indian gods. By presenting the Buddha as a prophet and Buddhism as a revelatory religion, this Buddhist campaign against the deities takes on new meaning as part of the Abrahamic message against idol worship.

Two examples are particularly striking here. In the introduction to the Buddhist account, the Buddhists are reported to say that the three Indian gods "Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma are unaware and ignorant of their state [ḥāl] as it is known to Shakyamuni." Furthermore, "whereas Shakyamuni is the prophet of compassion, pity, and kindness, they are the prophets of force and power; moreover, devilishness has remained in them for their vanity and self-aggrandizement, as Shiva says: 'I am the Lord, the Creator.'" Whereas their devotees believe that Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma are deities (khudāyān) to be feared, since they can inflict chaos and natural disasters, the Buddha refers to these three "prophets" as "the people of the devil" (ahl-i iblīs) for this very same reason—their vanity. The Buddha, on the other hand, does not claim the status of a deity.[63] This Buddhist claim about the Indian gods' or religious founders' ("prophets") lack of divinity is naturally also aligned with a monotheistic message.

The second example takes the Indian deities' demotion a step further by positioning the gods not even as prophets but as angels in service of the Buddha. According to Muslim traditions, angels are inferior to human prophets and are tasked with facilitating God's communication therewith.[64] We learn in the *History* that after his miraculous birth, "four angels who *claim to be deities*[65]—Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, and Indra—arrive." Disguised as midwives, "they rinse him in lukewarm water from falling rain." Later, the Buddha's parents carry him to an idol house so that "he would prostate himself before the statues of the same four angels." Yet the deities' four effigies—made of gold, silver, stone, and wood—come to life and prostate themselves before the young Buddha instead. The worshippers at the shrine are shocked to discover that their gods revere the Buddha, not vice versa.[66]

This account is loosely based on a well-known story about the infant Buddha that appears in the *Lalitavistara*, one of his earliest biographies dated to the third or fourth century AD: the Buddha's father carries the infant prince to the temple to worship the idols, yet once they step inside, the statues rise, and then bow at the Buddha's feet.[67] Donald Lopez compares this story to the account of Baby Jesus in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew: after fleeing from Nazareth, Mary and Jesus enter a temple in Egypt but find the idols shattered and lying on their faces as if prostrating before the infant.[68] Whereas the Christian account attests to the monotheist disillusionment with idol worship, the Buddhist story is about the Buddha's own status as "the god beyond gods" (devatideva). In Buddhist cosmology, the gods possess supernatural powers but are not omnipotent, eternal metapersons. They too are caught in the Wheel of Life, the cycle of rebirths, having reached their current station thanks to their past merit. They too will suffer the consequences of their actions and might be reborn as lesser beings.[69]

Hence, despite the similarities between the *Lalitavistara* and Pseudo-Matthew accounts, they articulate a major difference between the monotheist and Buddhist approaches to religious competition. Monotheist religions are characterized by an

inherent "offensiveness," seeking to monopolize the divine by refuting truth claims of other religions and negating their metapersons. Conversely, Buddhism "was not founded upon a covenant with a jealous metaperson demanding 'faith.'" Instead, it seeks to assimilate local traditions, practices, shrines, and metapersons into its own ritual and cosmic domains. It allows its adherents to maintain their relations with deities of diverse origins, while subordinating and relativizing them within a Buddhist cosmic order.[70] Buddhism has thus met its religious competitors with a form of "hierarchical inclusion," subsuming the deities into the Buddhist pantheon.[71]

In the *History of India*, the Indian deities are subsumed into the Buddhist narrative through their designation as angels. This is inconsistent with their presentation as prophets just a few paragraphs earlier. Yet the chapter is replete with such inconsistencies in the "translation" of the Indic religious landscape. We can see these discrepancies as an attempt to "do justice" to the diverse ways in which Indian believers (and their adversaries) perceived their objects of worship: while their worshippers saw them as gods, they functioned, from the Islamic perspective, more like the prophets or the eponyms of the Islamic legal schools.[72] Another option is to contextualize this inconsistency within a wider pattern of Islamic engagement with Indian modes of devotion through "dynamic translation": this is a process predicated on equivalences and analogous functions, allowing for shifts in the translation in keeping with the context.[73] The choice of angels therefore fits these deities' role as messengers between God and the Buddha Prophet. It also however reaffirms Shakyamuni's prophetic rank, and the message of Indian subordination and hierarchical assimilation within the Buddhist "angelic pantheon."

Through the Islamic lens, however, the account of the Buddha's visit to the shrine invokes another monotheist narrative, that of the demystification of and disenchantment with the deities, reminding the Muslim reader of Ibrahim's smashing of the idols. The Islamic assimilation of Buddhism is thus defined by a hierarchical salvific order, with Buddhism representing Islam's monotheist proxy in the Indian religious landscape. Buddhism becomes Islam's Indian representative "demoting" India's gods; yet with Islam's abrogation of Buddhism, both the Indian deities and the Buddha are subordinated to Muhammad's superior, ultimate revelation. Put differently, in an argument that seems tailored to mirror if not also to outmatch Buddhism's own system of hierarchical inclusion, the Buddha is granted a prophetic position only to be cast aside, like Judaism and Christianity, as embodying a revelation inferior to Muhammad's.

BUDDHISM AS ARCHETYPICAL PAGANISM

While Buddhism is generously accommodated with Islamic terms in the *History of India,* it is also subjected to criticism. The chapter presents the Buddha in a

negative light as the source of Arabian as well as Persian paganism, and Buddhism as the archetypical and purest form of the belief in transmigration. This critical stance is already found in the introduction to the Buddhist section, where the Buddhists are accused not only of worshipping an idol of Shakyamuni but also of serving as a bad example for other Indian religions identified with Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma. The various religious affiliations of the inhabitants of China, India, Southeast Asia, Kashmir, Central Asia, Tibet, and the Tanguts are explored in the section dedicated to the geographical expansion and sectarian divisions of the Buddhist communities.[74] The section concludes with a note on pre-Islamic Arabia during the dawn of Islam that conflates Buddhism with pre-Islamic idolatry: "Prior to the age of Islam, all of Mecca and Medina, along with some of the Arabs and the Persians, had followed Shakyamuni, and in the House of the Kaʿba, they placed idols resembling the image and figure of the Buddha, and worshiped them. The Prophet, God's prayer be upon him, ordered them to be destroyed, and to introduce the people to his pure religion."[75]

This anecdote likely draws on popular Islamic traditions imagining India as the birthplace of Arabian idolatry, connecting Arabian and Indian polytheism.[76] Following the Deluge, during the time of the prophet Noah, idols were washed away from India, some emerging near Jeddah on the Arabian coast. From there, they were transported to Mecca where, according to other stories, they became objects of worship for pilgrims from distant places such as India.[77] The identification of the idols as Buddha images rather than their association with Hinduism fits in with the chapter's scheme of promoting Buddhism as a superior form of the Indian religions. It is also consistent with Rashid al-Din's interest in valorizing Buddhism as the archetypical and pristine form of paganism Islam is set to eradicate.[78]

Muslim authors who wished to project a positive image of Indian beliefs found ways around the issue of idol worship. Biruni argued that Indian paganism resulted from the masses corrupting true, monotheist-like Hindu beliefs.[79] Others suggested that it was a form of meditation, and thus comparable to Sufi practices.[80] Simnani, who was made to take part in the Muslim-Buddhist debates at Arghun's court (see the introduction), also "exonerated" the Buddha of paganism, attributing idolatry practices to the Buddha's disciples, who either corrupted or misunderstood their master's original teachings. The Buddhists understood the Buddha's description of his past reincarnations, as visualized in images, to be a literal representation of his experiences, whereas his accounts were akin to the spiritual visions Sufi novices experienced along the path toward unification with the divine.[81]

These examples all raise the question why the *History of India* emphasizes rather than downplays or reinterprets Buddhism's alleged historical role in the spread of idol worship. The answer lies perhaps in the historical context: the *History* might hierarchically assimilate Buddhism, assigning it to the role of Islam's monotheist "extension" in the Indian religious arena; but in the Ilkhanid domestic arena, Mus-

lims continued to encounter the Buddhists as a foreign religious force. Casting Buddhism as the archetypical form of paganism should also be read against the backdrop of contemporaneous developments in the Ilkhanate—namely, the Mongol elite's Islamization and the court's official denunciation of Buddhism.

In Rashid al-Din's *Blessed History of Ghazan*, the ruler's break with idol worship and his order to shatter the Buddhist idols, destroy their temples, and establish mosques in their stead operate as tangible demonstrations of his new commitment to Islam. They flesh out a link between the convert Ghazan, an idol-smashing monotheist (*muvaḥḥid*), and the narratives of the iconoclastic Muhammad and Ibrahim.[82] The description of the Kaʿba as housing statues of the Buddha Shakyamuni in the *History of India* not only corresponds with this triumphant narrative of Mongol conversion but may also register Muslim sentiments and anxieties about Islam's holiest site prior to Ghazan's conversion, when Buddhism's influence at court was at its height. According to two Ilkhanid accounts, prior to his death, Saʿd al-Dawla (d. 1291), the Jewish vizier of Buddhist enthusiast Ilkhan Arghun, plotted, together with Arghun, a military campaign against the Kaʿba and Ali's shrine to coerce the Muslims to worship the Buddhist idols.[83]

"RATIONAL BUDDHISTS": CHANGING ISLAMIC PERCEPTIONS

To what extent did Muslim encounters with Buddhism under the Ilkhans change Muslim perceptions of the Buddhists? The detailed account of the Buddha's life and teachings in the *History of India* is a remarkable testimony of the expansion and revision of Muslim knowledge about Buddhist traditions and of the dissemination of Buddhism following the unification of Eurasia under Mongol control. As we have seen, it also retains elements of Buddhist approaches to debating and disarming their religious competition in India. The *History* is, moreover, not detached from a broader trajectory of Muslim approaches to Indian religions and devotional practices, and it is in constant dialogue with prior Muslim perceptions of the Buddhists and the Dharma. In the final section of this chapter, we turn to an important passage in one of Rashid al-Din's refutations of reincarnation. While the vizier's refutations will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, we draw attention to this passage here since it relates to changes to the Islamic perception of Buddhism, from an irrational to a rational tradition.

Several scholars have drawn attention to certain parallels between early Islamic theological concepts, especially in relation to the development of Islamic atomism, and Indian-Buddhist cosmological theories. These parallels, along with references to early contacts and interreligious debates between Buddhist philosophers and Muslim theologians, have led some to speculate that Buddhist-Muslim exchanges influenced aspects of early kalam.[84] Whether these apocryphal reports are

grounded in some historical reality or not, the Buddhists have come to be identi-
fied in Islamic tradition not as representing rational thought and dialectics but as
the deniers of reason altogether.

Referring to the Buddhists as the *sumaniyya* sect, based on the Sanskrit term
for Buddhist monks,[85] Muslim authors broadly ascribed to them idol worship,
belief in the eternity of the world, reincarnation, and knowledge based solely on
the five senses, and therefore also the denial of the "validity of reasoning [*naẓar*]
and logical inference [*istidlāl*]."[86] While this view of "irrational" Buddhists or at
least extreme skeptics may have been based on initial Muslim impressions of Bud-
dhist doctrine and beliefs,[87] it had less to do with Buddhist teachings in the long
run. Instead, it represented the Muslims' outward projection of internally per-
ceived heretical doctrines onto some lesser-known religious groups. Presenting
the Buddhists as the deniers of reason was a mechanism for identifying doctrines,
opinions, groups, and individuals as foreign to Islam, and thus as worthy of rejec-
tion and censure.[88]

This view of the Buddhists as the deniers of rational inference (and thus as the
deniers of arguments not based on a palpable proof that is perceived by the senses)
remained standard among medieval Ashʿarite theologians through the Ilkhanid
period as well. Fakhr al-Din Razi (see introduction) defined the *sumaniyya* as the
radical deniers of rational reasoning, listing four objections of different scope and
nature that they supposedly presented against the validity of logic. Razi's succes-
sors in the Ilkhanate developed and elaborated this claim, promoting their image
as extreme anti-rationalists.[89] The Ilkhanid Shafiʿi Qadi Baydawi, for example,
extensively refuted the *sumaniyya*'s alleged convictions, using his disputation to
discuss whether knowledge obtained through rational methods such as syllogisms
constituted essential, inherent knowledge.[90]

This perception of Buddhism, however, does not fit together with Buddhism's
highly developed tradition of rational and philosophical inquiry formed in the
competitive religious and philosophical environment in which it emerged.[91] Bud-
dhist methods of dialectical and deductive argumentation have striking parallels
with Hellenistic-rooted European scholastic methods of reasoning, so much so
that some scholars have been led to speculate that European scholasticism is
rooted in Buddhist traditions.[92]

Moreover, Buddhists used their methods of rational disputation in the inter-
faith debates at the courts of the Mongol khans.[93] William of Rubruck (ca. 1220–ca.
1293) attested to the prevalence of the Buddhist tradition of disputation in his
account of the multilateral debate at Möngke's (r. 1251–59) court in Qaraqorum.
While William presented his scholastic skills as superior to those of his Buddhist
agonist—a claim that should be taken with a grain of salt[94]—his account of the
debate demonstrated that methods of rational argumentation were a shared cur-
rency between medieval Europe and China.[95] Despite having to go through two

rounds of translation—from Latin to Mongolian and to Chinese (and vice versa)—the Catholic and the Buddhist were still able to find common rational grounds.

Rashid al-Din supports this later image of Buddhism, contradicting earlier and current Muslim views of the *sumaniyya.* His remarks on the Buddhist approach to logic are part of his discussion of the methods for debating and disputing representatives of the nonmonotheist religions in his second refutation of reincarnation titled the "The Precious Thoughts" (*Nafāʾis al-afkār*). There, he explains that the Qurʾan may serve as proof for the People of the Book on matters of the afterlife, such as physical resurrection. Yet the Buddhists and other idol worshippers who "do not believe in the prophets and the scriptural corpus of the revelation [*kutub-i rabbānī*]" and who deny the resurrection altogether must be disputed in rational debates (*maʿqūl baḥs*). The miracle of Qurʾanic revelation needs to be proved to them using rational arguments.

The vizier's insights here are based on his firsthand impressions of the monks. He states that his research for the *Compendium* has involved interviewing Buddhist informants, and that through his formal and informal conversations with them, he has learned much about their dogma and beliefs. He describes them as presenting "a wise and pleasant [*laṭīf*] character," and commends them as agreeable and worthy interlocutors, since they "listen to reason and speak with reason." He further writes that

> It became known from their words that their school/religion [*madhhab*], too, does not say that the world is completely ancient and they too believe it is impossible that the world is completely eternal and uncreated; but they say that it will exist for a great, countless number of years, and although they do not believe in the deluge of Noah, they do concur with the universal [/general] deluge [*ṭūfān-i kullī*] and the resurrection.[96]

In this final observation, the vizier likely relies on the *History of India,* where the term *kalpa,* the Buddhist aeon, is glossed as "deluge."[97]

Aside from "correcting" past impressions of the Buddhists, their presentation as rational interlocutors serves additional purposes. First, it enables the vizier to argue for a common ground between Buddhism and Islam, thus forming the basis for rationally disputing the Buddhists and their belief in reincarnation, as we will see in chapter 2. It also enables the incorporation of Buddhism, except for certain "distortions," such as the Buddhist "misguided" belief in reincarnation, within the fold of an Islamic universe defined by monotheistic revelation and the finality of prophecy. Finally, presenting the Buddhists as rational debaters also situates the vizier in the optimal position of the rational theologian able to confront and overcome this religious Other. The vizier was certainly far from the first theologian to the refute the belief in metempsychosis with "rational" demonstrations. Rather, as we will show in chapter 2, he tapped into a long tradition of anti-reincarnation

treatises and debates by leading scholars.[98] However, for Rashid al-Din, that the Buddhists can be approached through rational argumentation further reaffirms and supports his appropriation of an Avicennized-rationalist kalam, with its reconciliation of reason and scripture. The latter becomes the only effective means of beating the Buddhists on the intellectual battlefield of the Ilkhanid court and the Mongol Empire, more broadly.

CONCLUSION

Rashid al-Din's conjecture that, owing to their rational nature, the Buddhists, along with other polytheists, are best disputed and persuaded with the tools provided by the rationalist theologians, is echoed in a fifteenth-century work by Yemenite Muʿtazili author Ahmad ibn Yahya Murtada (d. 1436). It narrates a story about the eighth-century caliph Harun al-Rashid, who suspended all religious disputations (*al-jidāl fī al-dīn*) in his court and, having tired of their constant bickering, imprisoned the theologians. When the king of Sind wrote to the caliph requesting that he send him someone to debate the king's wise Buddhist pandit (*al-sumanī*) about the veracity of Islam, the caliph sent a judge. The judge, however, failed to rise to the Buddhist challenge. The Buddhist asked the judge whether his all-powerful God could create an entity like himself. The judge answered that this question belonged to the field of theology, was considered an "innovation" (*bidʿa*), and thus a form of heresy. Convinced now of the Muslims' ignorance, the Indian ruler sent the judge back to Harun with a letter describing the confrontation. The caliph was mortified. He looked for a scholar who could defend the honor of Islam and was subsequently reminded of the incarcerated theologians. Indeed, a boy from among them easily solved and disputed the challenge posed by the Buddhist, impressing the caliph. The caliph, however, ended up sending an older, more experienced theologian to India. Yet the Buddhist monk, who feared the theologian, had him poisoned before he could reach his patron's court.[99]

The point of the story is obviously to demonstrate the superiority of the rationalist theologians.[100] While the story's author is most likely unfamiliar with Rashid al-Din's writings, he nevertheless confirms his message regarding the importance of kalam in interreligious disputations, especially with nonmonotheist scholars. The tale, however, carries further significance: as in Rashid al-Din's view of the monks, the Buddhist appears in this story as a rational disputer, quite different from the irrational *sumaniyya* of early kalam discourses.

This chapter traced Buddhism's twofold, contradictory role in the *Compendium*: as Islam's monotheist "kin" in India, similarly demoting the Indian deities, but also as source of the alien intrusion of idolatry and paganism into pre-Islamic Arabia, as well as a current threat to Islam's status in the Ilkhanate. We further saw

that Rashid al-Din presented a view of the Buddhists as rational disputers, one that differed from earlier theological accounts thereof. Indeed, as will be seen in the next chapter, Rashid al-Din turned that same "weapon" against them by employing scholastic arguments and philosophical demonstrations to refute the Buddhist belief in metempsychosis and to argue for bodily resurrection.

Perfect Souls, Imperfect Bodies

Refuting Reincarnation at the Mongol Court

The angel asked: what is pleasing for people but is not good [for them]? What has benefit but does not please people? Which affliction causes great suffering, and what physician and medicine are there to liberate the people from all suffering?

    Answer: Shakyamuni said: as for that which has the appearance of being pleasant but is not, worldly [things that are bought/sold] with fortune are pleasing but are not good for the sake of one's welfare; as for that which is beneficial but appears unpleasant, that is relinquishing the world; as for the affliction that causes much suffering, that is greed, lust, passion, and yearning; the doctor and the medicine that liberate from all the afflictions is the perfect man, whom the wise men of India call samyaksambuddha *[perfectly enlightened Buddha].*[1]

In chapter 1, we examined the *History of India* in Rashid al-Din's *Compendium,* focusing on its second section, which elaborates on the Buddha's life and Buddhist doctrine. This section also explores the six realms of existence, the principle of karmic reincarnation, the Buddha's teachings about ethics and rebirth (the "Wheel of Life"), and the attributes of the Buddhist heavens and the multilevel hell.[2] We learn why the individual is subject to a specific rebirth as demon, animal, human, or human-angel hybrid.[3] The wicked, such as tyrants and murderers, are reborn as serpents, scorpions, and venomous animals, whereas individuals devoted to building schools, hospices, and places of worship are reborn as immaculate and will enjoy great wealth and fortune. Individuals who truthfully serve their teachers, parents, and masters (*pīr*) "will arrive at the level of a king or the level of a prince in the next life."[4]

    Considering the central place that these topics occupy in the *History of India,* it is no surprise that Rashid al-Din targets the Buddhist doctrine of metempsychosis in his theological corpus. He dedicates three separate and extensive treatises to refuting the belief in reincarnation. Furthermore, he concludes the seemingly

favorable description of Buddhism in the *History of India* in a sober, even negative, tone. To the *History,* he appends the first of his three refutations: "The Debates that Muslims and the Other People of the Book Have with the People of Reincarnation and Some of the People Who Deny the Gathering of the Bodies, the Materialists[5] and the Others."[6] Explaining why he includes this treatise as the final thread in the account of the Buddha, Rashid al-Din describes Buddhism as a rare example of a persisting "enclave" of the misguided belief in metempsychosis, and moreover, as its purest form:[7]

> Since the rest of the people of India believe in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and this belief, by which I mean metempsychosis, has been obliterated from all the religions, especially the religion of the Muslims, which is the cream of all religions . . . and since the history of Shakyamuni and [the account of] the state of his religion, which is the pure religion of metempsychosis [*maḥẓ dīn al-tanāsukh*], has come to an end, we wished to add at this point the treatise that was previously written by this poor one regarding the refutation of metempsychosis, and on the weakness of their belief and creed.

Rashid al-Din's refutation, accordingly, is intended to uncover the depravity and falsity of the belief in reincarnation,[8] with the hope that this treatise will be like medicine for readers "afflicted" by this belief. Interestingly, this metaphor echoes the description of the Buddha's own teachings as medicine.[9]

In another treatise in which the vizier addresses and denies the accusations of unbelief (*takfīr*) that were made against him, especially in light of his Jewish background, Rashid al-Din lists his refutations of reincarnation as proof of the sincerity of his faith, and moreover, of his great efforts to defend Islam from heretical beliefs and charges made against the Muslim faith by members of other religions, including Judaism.[10] Yet Rashid al-Din's inclusion of his earlier refutation of transmigration of souls at the end of the chapter on India is also a means of shielding himself against criticism over the detailed description of the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation in the chapter. The Ilkhanid vizier employs various measures to distance himself from the accounts of other religious communities in the *Compendium.* He claims that the historian's duty is to deliver the history of a given people uncensored, according to its own claims, and that he cannot be held accountable for reporting what is known to be contrary to reason.[11] However, this is also the only instance in the *Compendium* where the vizier includes his own theological writings in the text to demonstrate his objection to the reported beliefs. This is therefore a uniquely extreme measure undertaken by Rashid al-Din to demonstrate his opposition to this conviction, pointing more broadly to the threat that Buddhism and especially its doctrine of reincarnation posed in his mind.

As the next chapters will demonstrate, behind Rashid al-Din's obsession with Buddhist reincarnation also lie greater and more immediate concerns—namely,

the Buddhists' superior ability to translate, subsume, and domesticate the Ching-gisids' immanentist model of sacral kingship through the karmic model of universal emperorship (on the Cakravartin, see chapter 3). In Ilkhanid Iran, the afterlife had been transformed into a locus of intense interreligious rivalry and competition over the conversion of the Mongol elite, as well as a medium for imitation and appropriation. This chapter explores Rashid al-Din's discussion of a specific set of philosophical-theological problems concerning the soul's temporal origination, individuation, incorporeality and immortality, and bodily resurrection. While the vizier largely relies on arguments by earlier Muslim thinkers, he also refashions them to respond specifically to the Buddhist challenge of reincarnation, and thus also to the Buddhists' merit-based system of kingship.

Rashid al-Din's three refutations constitute an effort not only to disprove the theory of reincarnation but also to refine the distinctions between the two traditions that have more in common with each other than what initially meets the eye. As we show here, the core issue for the vizier is not the number of rebirths that resurrectionists claim but the principle of attachment to one's specific earlier body. From the vizier's standpoint, both the Muslim resurrection and the Buddhist metempsychosis assume the "bodily reincarnation" of the soul but differ as to the need for *a* body (metempsychosis) as opposed to *the specific* body (resurrection).[12] For this reason, Rashid al-Din finds himself in a peculiar position: he cannot advance too far in refuting the Buddhist reincarnation without challenging the foundation of the Muslim dogma of the physical resurrection as well. While contesting the Buddhist soteriological system, especially its theorization of rebirths as a means for the self to advance toward perfection and nirvana, he is also careful not to destabilize the shared theoretical foundation in such a way that could damage his additional agenda, which was to prove the corporeal resurrection in the same body. The Ilkhanid vizier uses the tools provided by Razi's synthesis (itself based on the Greek-Islamic foundation) to walk this very fine line.

PERFECTING DEFECTIVE SOULS: RAZI'S THEORY OF VIRTUE AND BUDDHISM

Rashid al-Din begins his first refutation of reincarnation with a straightforward and succinct description of the Buddhist dogma of metempsychosis, summarizing its main points of disagreement with the Muslim doctrine of resurrection:

> The people of reincarnation believe the preexistence [*qidam*] of the souls and that each soul that leaves the body immediately joins [*taʿalluq*] another body in accordance with the *actions* of said person. They even say that every soul that reaches a lower level [or: reaches imperfection][13] joins vile bodies to the extent that [they say that] it also joins the bodies of vile animals, until they reach the level of a mosquito.

> And every soul that *reaches perfection* [*kamāl*; my emphasis] joins a body that is nobler [*ashraf*] than its former body. A few souls that reach perfection join nobler bodies *until they reach the degree of kings and prophets* [my emphasis]. And the dogma [*madhhab*] of the Muslims and the rest of the People of the Book is that the soul does not preexist, but is temporally created [*muḥdas̱*], and the resurrection of the bodies [*ḥashr-i ajsād*] will definitely take place, but in the same body that the soul left. The people who do good deeds, will go to heaven, and the people who do bad, will go to hell.[14]

The presentation of the belief in metempsychosis seems largely aimed at identifying the main differences between the Muslim and Buddhist worldviews on the afterlife: the temporal origination of the soul versus its preexistence; resurrection in the same body versus reincarnation in another; and belief in heaven and hell versus karmic rebirths. However, it also establishes a common, Buddhist-Muslim foundation from which the vizier can launch his disputation of reincarnation. This foundation is based on the equation of ethical and intellectual individual perfection and redemption. Establishing this moral-perfectionist equivalence is significant for the vizier's ability to critically engage and dispute the Buddhist system of rebirths in the rest of this treatise. While, according to his statement, both Buddhist and Muslim souls reap the consequences of their actions, the soul's "true" aim is reaching ethical and intellectual perfection in this world, which translates into a better, more advanced reincarnation according to the Buddhists, or a favorable outcome—pleasure and happiness—in the afterworld in accordance with Muslim views.

Rashid al-Din's perfectionist outlook of the afterlife drew on the perfectionist theory of virtue devised by twelfth-century theologian Fakhr al-Din Razi. Razi had initially accepted the classical theological doctrine on the purely physical nature of the human essence. This physicalist vision of man dictated "a creedal approach to knowledge, an ethics of action oriented at duties and rules of conduct."[15] According to this view, as long as an individual held on to the correct doctrine and his actions followed the rules of the Revealed Law, his soul would find reward in the hereafter. However, in his later works, Razi largely replaced this action-oriented ethics with a new framework of character-oriented perfectionism. He adopted the Avicennan stance on the unphysical nature of the rational soul. Advocating for a body-soul dualism informed by Avicenna was further conducive to a new soteriological and anthropocentric orientation that better matched the new Ashʿarite thinkers of the twelfth century.[16]

Rejecting theological physicalism, Razi contends that the rational soul—an entity abstracted or divorced from matter—would experience a spiritual hereafter in addition to a physical one. The soul's level of happiness or misery in the spiritual afterlife is determined by the level of intellectual perfection it has attained in this world. This perfection is achieved through theoretical knowledge—that is, knowledge of the

nature and existence of God and his relationship with the world. The soul attaches itself to matter only to perfect this knowledge. Perfecting this knowledge, or rational reflection, is therefore intrinsically moral and salvific, since it leads to spiritual pleasure in the afterlife. Adherence to doctrine and the performance of acts of worship are therefore "demoted" to the rank of means toward perfection, rather than ends in their own right. Like Avicenna, Razi considers the body to be an instrument for the acquisition of knowledge to help the soul in its pursuit of intellectual-ethical perfection, and accordingly, pleasure and felicity in the hereafter.[17]

This is also the foundation for Razi's teleological theory of prophethood. In his argument for the necessity of prophethood, he appropriates the key Avicennan principle that if a human attribute is found in deprivation, it must also exist in perfection. This includes the attribute of achieving perfect theoretical knowledge and thus also posthumous felicity or salvation, which becomes the basis for his hierarchical model of human perfection.[18] Razi found that the majority of human beings have imperfect and defective souls, and therefore occupy the lowest level in this hierarchy. At the higher echelons, we find the saints and prophets, both gifted with rare intellects capable of gaining knowledge intuitively with little to no effort or theoretical reflection. They require neither teachers nor the instrument of logic to attain their intellectual perfection. However, the prophets alone can perfect others' imperfect souls.[19] As noted above, Razi equates intellectual perfection with morality, forming the basis for his understanding of the prophet as "a man who invites people to this perfection." The goal of prophethood is to perfect the defective souls and guide them to this posthumous happiness, and therefore, "Revelation itself becomes primarily a means to the ultimate goal of intellectual perfection, rather than to communicating theological knowledge."[20]

An example for how this perfectionist outlook established a common Muslim-Buddhist foundation is seen in the *History of India*. The introduction to the account of Buddhism presents a doxography of the Buddha Shakyamuni's followers into three hierarchic categories. This division is informed by the Mahayana and possibly the Tantric Buddhist tradition.[21] The first category comprises the *śrāvaka/shrāvakas* ("auditors"), who blindly follow and imitate (*muqallidūn*) the Buddha's teachings. The second is the *pratyekabuddha* ("solitary awake ones"), who "believe that they save mankind from misfortune and that they help and support them." The third is the *samyaksambuddha* ("perfectly enlightened Buddhas"), who "guide men and perfect the defective souls [*yukammilūn al-nufūs al-nāqiṣa*] by leading them . . . to the level of the angels and of holy intellects [*al-ʿuqūl al-qudsiyya*]," and who dedicate themselves "to the secrets, signs, investigations, discoveries, and the wisdom that Shakyamuni had acquired."[22]

This salvific-perfectionist division of the Buddha's followers has significant parallels with Razi's classification of the souls, in accordance with their level of perfection, into commoners, saints, and prophets.[23] The first group comprises the "audi-

tors" or blind imitators. The saints are equivalent to the "solitary awaked ones"—they perform miracles and save individuals but cannot perfect other souls. Finally, the prophets are equivalent to the "perfectly enlightened Buddhas," since they can perfect the defective souls of others and guide them toward the holy intellect and salvation.[24]

This perfectionist outlook is also made clear in the description of the worship of Guanyin—the Bodhisattva of Compassion—a common Chinese Buddhist practice, possibly also shared by the Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Mongols.[25] In the *History of India,* Guanyin[26] is identified as an eternal being (*vujūdī*) tasked with delivering perfect souls ("spirits") from their defective animal form (*ashbāḥ-i nāqiṣa*) to the human level.[27] These two examples from the *History of India* demonstrate that, along with other Islamic frameworks such as Sufi terminologies, Razi's theological model of salvation through intellectual perfection was also used to "translate" Buddhist concepts and traditions into Islamic idioms.

In his refutations of reincarnation, we see that Rashid al-Din reaches a similar conclusion. He draws on Razi's discussions of the nature of the soul to further theorize about the correlation between the self-perfecting soul and its physical frame. The vizier's discussion in his first and second refutations center on two interrelated themes. The first is the relationship between the soul's achievement of moral and intellectual perfection(s) and its need for a corresponding corporeal vehicle in this life to achieve them and to attain spiritual pleasure, felicity, and salvation. The second is the correlation between the soul's ethical-intellectual self-perfection and its soteriological or redemptive condition—that is, its compatibility with the condition of the body that the soul will reinhabit after the physical resurrection.

Addressing these issues, Rashid al-Din retailors earlier arguments of Muslim theologians and philosophers, especially Razi, regarding body-soul relations. He repurposes the arguments and demonstrations Razi provides for the incorporeality of the soul and the body-soul bond to prove the resurrection in the same body, on the one hand, and to dispute the Buddhist claim of reincarnation in a new body, on the other. As seen in chapter 1, the vizier explains his decision to refute the Buddhist belief in reincarnation through theological arguments and rational demonstrations, which are based largely on the Islamic assimilation of the Greek legacy, arguing that resorting to scripture would not help convince idolaters to accept Islam as they disagree on its most basic tenets, such as reward and punishment in the afterlife. Instead, he notes that the Buddhists "listen to reason and speak with reason," and therefore must be disputed through rational debates and approached with persuasive rational proofs.[28]

Rashid al-Din was not the first to link the debate over reincarnation to Indian influences, on the one hand, and to philosophical discussions about the eternity of the soul or its temporal origination rooted in Greek Neoplatonism, on the other. Biruni's study of India demonstrated this peculiar combination. He associated

metempsychosis with the Indian religious creed, but he refuted it based on its Greek-Platonist formulation.[29] By consigning his discussion of metempsychosis to the Indian sphere, Biruni may have been seeking to explore this aspect of the Greek philosophical tradition without having to risk himself becoming a target for accusations of heresy and disbelief by other Muslims.[30] Reincarnation was identified in Islamic heresiography as a prominent, if not the most distinguishing, feature of the Indian religions, but at the same time it was discussed mainly to resolve the conflict between the Platonist stance regarding the eternity of the soul and the Muslim doctrine of resurrection.[31] As result, medieval authors assumed that there was a link between the Indian or Buddhist belief in reincarnation and Greek philosophical traditions.[32]

However, there is a major difference between the way Rashid al-Din applies Razi's Avicennan perfectionist theory of virtue to explain Buddhist doctrine and the way his predecessors had approached the Indian belief in reincarnation. The vizier does not engage with the doctrine of reincarnation to make his stand on an "internal" Islamic debate about the assimilation of Greek philosophy.[33] Rather, the vizier uses Razi's theoretical framework to establish a common ground between Islam and Buddhism. He employs these Greek-informed philosophical inquiries as a shared basis from which to launch his disputation of the Buddhist reincarnation. Specifically, he aims to counter the Buddhist stance regarding the soul's need to reincarnate in new bodies to reach perfection and redemption. He also provides an alternative to Buddhism—a resurrection-based theory of bodily perfection.

"THE DEBATES THAT MUSLIMS AND OTHER PEOPLE OF THE BOOK HAVE WITH THE REINCARNATIONISTS": FIRST REFUTATION

As we noted, Rashid al-Din's refutations proceed from premises shared between pro-reincarnation Buddhists and pro-resurrection Muslims. The first is that the soul needs a corporeal frame to advance itself toward perfection and redemption. The second is that the soul reassumes material form after death, whether in the soul's prior body (Islam) or in a new physical form (Buddhism). The third shared principle is that this old/new material frame must be a perfect match with the soul's level of ethical-intellectual (im)perfection, thus reflecting the soul's level of progress to, or deviation from salvation.

In his first refutation, the vizier briefly discusses the soul's temporal origination versus eternity. He then presents two initial arguments against metempsychosis. First, the soul's substance is comprised of a specific number of separate spiritual entities and divine attributes. Without the exact combination, this collection of entities would not constitute a rational soul; nor would it be considered a human being.[34] The "soul," therefore, cannot be reincarnated in a being of lower rank such as an animal. Owing to its relational character, if the rational soul is "reincarnated"

in a nonhuman body, it would be excluded from its kind and would no longer constitute a rational soul.[35] Second, given the soul's temporal origination—and that it is not eternal but created together with the body—it cannot have been attached to another, prior body.[36]

The vizier next proceeds to the main purpose of the refutation: proving unequivocally that the soul will be resurrected in the same body.[37] One of the arguments he develops relates to the exclusive relationship between the body and soul, a relationship that continues into the otherworld. The idea of an exclusive compatibility between the soul and a specific body that was generated to exactly match it is a key argument presented against metempsychosis by Muslim thinkers such as Razi.[38] Rashid al-Din argues that it is not only conceivable that one's body parts are rejoined and reconstituted through God's power and will—an argument made also by Razi in support of corporeal resurrection[39]—but that "it is more so inconceivable that the same parts would not be rejoined once again for the body of the same soul and that some other parts would be rejoined instead."[40] The vizier's argument is based on the full differentiation and exclusive compatibility of each body and every soul.[41] Since "each soul and body have a special capacity that is different from the capacity of other[s]," the body and the soul are made to perfectly match each other.[42] Therefore, the soul must be resurrected in the same body from which it has departed.[43]

To advance his main argument about the necessity of resurrection in the same body, Rashid al-Din first seeks to demonstrate another claim concerning the body's changeability and regeneration. Since he aims to show that the individual's body will match his or her moral and intellectual perfection in the afterlife, he applies this argument in a way that diverges from his predecessors. Avicenna and Razi had argued that since "the material body continuously undergoes change and dissolution," it "cannot be the basis for individual identity over time." This enabled them to determine, first, the very existence of the soul, and second, that the soul's substance, the essence of individual identity, must be incorporeal and immortal to enable the durability of individual self-awareness, despite the changes the body undergoes.[44] Razi further argued that the soul must differ from the body in order to guarantee resurrection.[45] Avicenna, on the other hand, used this concern over the body's decay to argue for a purely spiritual resurrection. Had there been a bodily resurrection, the soul would have to return to the body just as it was at the moment of corporeal death. This would be improper in the case of a blessed martyr, for example, whose body was heavily disfigured prior to his death.[46]

Rashid al-Din is not interested here in proving the existence, immortality, or noncorporeality of the soul's substance; instead, for him the body's continuous change and, more broadly, the discrepancy between man's spiritual, noncorporeal, and unchanging essence and his perishable form certainly present a challenge. Yet it is also an opportunity to lend additional support for corporeal resurrection. He begins by noting that his hypothetical, pro-reincarnation contender (*muʿāriż*)

might object to resurrection in the same body, arguing that since the body constantly disintegrates and regenerates, the soul cannot return to the very same body. The vizier's answer here is that the body stops changing at the moment of the soul's departure from it.[47] Furthermore, the compatibility between each bodily organ and the soul is retained right up to the individual's demise.[48]

Rashid al-Din then presents another counterargument. The "contender" initially agrees with his conclusion about the body-soul compatibility but then challenges the vizier: "Now, accordingly, when it [the soul] reaches perfection, the body that it had at first, no longer matches this perfection. Then it needs to join another body that matches and befits its most recent [level of] perfection." Rashid al-Din first answers that since the soul reunites with the body in its final state prior to its departure, "there is no doubt that it will match it" again. Furthermore, "any moment the substitution of the solubles[49] appears in one's body, the soul makes the body match its states." Rashid al-Din concludes that this natural process of disintegration and regeneration is divinely mandated for this exact purpose, so that "at all times, the body would be able to match the perfection of its soul."[50]

Proceeding from a Buddhist-Muslim "agreement" over the requirement of a matching body to achieve perfection and felicity or nirvana, Rashid al-Din finds a creative solution for the conundrum of the ongoing compatibility between a gradually self-perfecting soul and an ever-declining body. He argues for the soul's divinely designed mechanisms of transforming the body to match the individual's moral and intellectual perfection while still alive. By making this argument, the vizier seeks to present reincarnation as "irrelevant" from Buddhism's and Islam's "shared" perfectionist standpoint. He therefore also departs from Razi and other philosophers who sought to emphasize the Avicennan separation of mind from matter.[51] Razi posited that the states of the soul and the body are at odds. To perfect itself through theoretical knowledge and spiritual-ethical exercises, the soul has to deny the body its carnal pleasure and weaken it.[52] It is not that the vizier does not concur with Razi on this; rather, he prefers to emphasize the second part of this equilibrium. Addressing the Buddhist theory of reincarnation, he uses Razi's observations to further cement the relationship between individual bodies and souls and to accentuate the felicitous congruity awaiting both in the afterlife.

In the remainder of his first refutation, Rashid al-Din reestablishes the causal relationship between the body and soul but in the opposite direction. According to this "reversed" hylomorphic relationship, not only is the body an instrument for the soul's self-perfection but the soul also transforms the body to match its current stage in the progress to perfection. To prove the soul's separability from the material frame and its immaterial, immortal substance, Muslim philosophers have used the example of the incongruity between the individual's aging and weakening body and his soul's maturing intellectual capacity and progressively refined moral character.[53] Rashid al-Din, however, uses the same example to establish the intrinsic affinity between the

body and soul, rather than the inherent difference between mind and matter. Thus, he observes that the hypothetical pro-reincarnation contender can challenge corporeal resurrection with the observation that when the individual ages, his soul becomes more disciplined and intellectually refined, but his body grows older and weaker.

Rashid al-Din, however, argues that the soul will inhabit the same resurrected body but that this physical frame will also match the soul's level of intellectual and moral perfection. How, then, can the degenerated or even decomposed body match the perfected soul?[54] The vizier resolves this discrepancy by making the following observation that perfectly interlinks with Razi's ethics. He notes that "the states of the perfections of the individual, and his reward and punishment differ greatly during his lifetime." On the Day of Resurrection, all the individual's sins and good deeds, his intellectual and moral perfections and imperfections, will be weighed against each other, and a balance will be achieved. His bodily organs will be prepared and arranged in accordance with this balance, and thus the body will perfectly match the soul.[55] Once again, note that the argumentative distance between the author's position and his hypothetical reincarnationist is in fact rather small: Rashid al-Din argues for the ethical conditioning of bodily resurrection in place of Buddhism's ethically conditioned rebirth in a human body.[56]

The vizier further elaborates on the postresurrection compatibility between bodies and souls from a perfectionist-salvific standpoint: the individual

> gradually reaches perfection, through the instruments of the body and through experience, and by learning the sciences which he gains; since a heaven-heading individual [*bihishtī*] has with him knowledge and perfection, and [therefore] has body parts twice as much as needed, [his body] is equipped with the best parts to match his perfect soul . . . Surely, he would then have [in heaven] the most perfect intelligence and the most balanced temperament, be the most powerful, beautiful, and youthful, so that his intelligence and knowledge, as well as his body, would be in a perfect condition.

This same logic applies also to the hell-destined souls (*dūzakhīyān*). They will be tormented by their own reconstructed hellish bodies, intermixed (*amīkhta*) with punishment.[57] According to Rashid al-Din, the soul's achieved redemptive status is expressed in every aspect of the resurrected body—from its enhanced intelligence and blessed temperament to its beautiful or repulsive physical appearance.[58] The otherworldly body itself becomes an instrument for delivering bliss and pleasure, or torture and pain.[59]

"PRECIOUS THOUGHTS": SECOND REFUTATION

In his second refutation, Rashid al-Din further develops the main thrust of his argument on the reversal of the hylomorphic relationship between body and soul

in the afterlife, and the soul's reciprocation of the body's earlier service to it. He argues that the soul elevates the resurrected body to its own level of perfection. Here, too, the vizier's main objective is to establish the balance between body and soul in a creative way that both rejects reincarnationism and maintains the integrity of dogmatically mandated corporeal resurrection.

This treatise begins with the vizier's explanation of the circumstances leading to its composition at the behest of a group of his companions.[60] He shares with his readers four questions posed to him. The first and second concern the whereabouts and condition of the soul between the moment of death and its resurrection in the same body, and the possibility of the soul remaining disembodied in the meantime. The fourth question concerns the condition of heaven and earth on the Day of Resurrection. The third question, however, focuses on the soul's ability to achieve perfection without attachment to matter. The writer is asked whether it is possible for the soul to reach additional and different perfections without attachment to a body—that is, after physical demise and before resurrection.[61]

First, Rashid al-Din discusses the nonspatial and immaterial nature of the soul. In this world, the soul needs the body to attain its intellectual-moral perfection. Its attachment to the body individuates the human, as without it there is no man.[62] Likening the body to a material frame (*qālib*) holding another item (the soul), the vizier writes that once the item is built and reaches perfection, there is no longer need for the frame. The same goes for the causal relations between bodies and souls: "although the soul could attain perfection through the body in the first creation, in the second creation [after the resurrection], the body needs the soul, not the soul the body, and the perfection of the body on the Day of Resurrection [depends] on the soul."[63] In the afterlife, the soul reciprocates the body for its earlier service, enabling it to gain the "acquired knowledge" necessary for its self-perfection. The soul "owes" the body and rewards it (*mukāfāt, mujāzāt*) by perfecting it accordingly.

To illustrate this reversal of the body-soul relationship after the resurrection, Rashid al-Din compares the body to a bridge. From children and the poor to kings, amirs, and the wealthy, everyone must cross the bridge, and therefore all owe it for its service. However, the wealthy and powerful (perfect souls) have more possessions. The bridge therefore renders them a greater service in transferring their possessions (their perfections to the afterlife). The debt of the rich and powerful to the bridge is far greater, therefore. Once they arrive at their destination (heaven), they express their gratitude by building more bridges. Since the soul's levels of perfection are eternal, the more the soul advances in perfection, the greater are the body's rewards and compensation.[64] Owing to its contractual relationship with the body, the departed soul watches over its body despite its timeless state. In fact, the vizier explains, all souls, be they "those who have done evil or unbelievers who go through the torments of the grave until the Day of Resurrection . . . or

those who are believers and good doers . . . all experience a longing for their bodies until . . . reciprocity is completed."[65]

Rashid al-Din relates this discussion to the question of shrine visitation (see chapter 5), and even to the Buddhist practice of cremation. He explains that when we mourn the dead, we mourn only their bodies, not their eternal souls. Proof of the respect given to the bodies is found in the obligation to respect the graves. In fact, he claims, the visitation of the graves of prophets and saints is a religious observance. Furthermore, Rashid al-Din draws a direct parallel with the Buddhist approach to their special dead. Despite the depravity of their practice of cremation, they burn their dead out of respect for their bodies. He explains that they fear that if a worm were to be born from their bodies, a mouse or scorpion might eat it, and they therefore use cremation in this way preemptively. After cremation, the Buddhists bury the remains and watch over them, erecting a dome or monument at the location. The vizier concludes that if, like the Muslims, the Buddhists believe in rewarding the body for its services, this must indicate a common universal truth about the importance of the body.[66]

Advancing his point about this special attachment between the souls and their bodies in the hereafter, the vizier also establishes the difference between two kinds of intellectual perfections: that achieved during an individual's lifetime, and that which the soul might gain in the afterlife. The former is attained through one's bodily instruments, "the heart, the brain, and the senses";[67] it is sensory and therefore ultimately ephemeral. It can, however, undergird another, transcendental form of perfection. The soul gains perfection in the afterlife by building on the practical knowledge gained in this world.[68] Razi argues that the soul retains its perfection when it departs from the body but furthermore, that some souls perfect themselves to such a degree that they continue to increase in perfection in the afterlife, despite their immateriality.[69]

This reversal of body-soul relationship is taken a step further in the discussion of the ability of a few exclusive souls of prophetic ilk to perfect their bodies to such an extent that they can undertake heavenly ascension. In the vizier's mind, the souls' need for their bodies to achieve perfection corresponds to their ability to perfect the bodies: the less one has a need for one's body, the more one can perfect it.[70] At the extreme of this inverted relationship we find prophetic souls capable of physical ascension to heaven. Owing to the physical changes the body incurs thanks to its perfection by the soul, it can "become strong like the soul and ascend [ʿurūj] with it; to honor it [the body], the soul carries it with it [to heaven]. The powerful perfect soul delivers the body to such a position that it is with it like sugar becomes dissolved in water."[71] This reference is possibly an indication of Razi's later view of the soul as made of a spiritual substance suffused throughout the bodily organs.[72]

The best example of this is Muhammad's ascension. In another treatise, on the Prophet's ascension, the vizier discusses corporeal versus spiritual ascension. He

argues that Muhammad had no need for his body to reach perfection since he was a prophet before his soul had joined his body. Rashid al-Din argues that Muhammad's soul was already at the fullest degree of perfection available to humans,[73] and that it only attached itself to the body to perfect the imperfect beings, the rest of humanity.[74]

This statement is consistent with Razi's teleological theory of prophecy. According to the latter, the prophets' role is to perfect the defective souls of the commoners. As noted above, the same model is also applied in the *History of India* to the perfectly enlightened Buddhas, who are also tasked with perfecting the commoners. Interestingly, this Muslim-Buddhist equivalence also stretches to the enlightened Buddhas' approach to the body (reincarnation). Since, like the prophets, the Buddhas no longer need reincarnation in a physical body to reach nirvana, they too return only to guide others through the cycles of rebirth. This equivalence, however, sheds different light on Rashid al-Din's emphasis that Muhammad's perfect soul was free of the need to perfect itself through the body. It points to Muhammad's superiority in relation to the Buddha: Shakyamuni, after all, needed multiple rebirths to reach enlightenment, a theme emphasized in the *History* as well; Muhammad, on the other hand, arrived already perfected.

In sum, Rashid al-Din leads the readers to two main conclusions about the bond between souls and their bodies. First, the soul has a special duty toward the body in the afterlife owing to its prior service. The souls reciprocate and transform their bodies in the resurrection to match their level of ethical and intellectual (im)perfection attained during their lifespan. Second, the soul continues to perfect itself in the afterlife, achieving a significantly superior and eternal perfection based on its prior, ephemeral perfection. These two conclusions allow the vizier to dismiss the need for corporeal rebirth to achieve perfection (as the Buddhists argue) and, conversely, to prove the necessity of corporeal resurrection. If the soul can continue perfecting itself after the corporeal demise, there is no longer a need for multiple reincarnations to achieve felicity and salvation.

HIERARCHIES, KINGS, AND MATERIAL ASPECTS OF THE AFTERWORLD

Death, the afterlife, and funeral rites and practices afforded discursive, ritualistic, and material spaces for the delineation and differentiation of religious and communal boundaries. In the first centuries of Islam, Muslims discussed death rituals not only to fashion and reinforce clear-cut boundaries between the nascent Muslim community and their non-Muslim neighbors and subjects but also as a means of imposing social hierarchies, in which religious experts were at the top and wailing women were at the bottom. The Islamization of body and society entailed the performance and reaffirmation of categories of difference based on social and reli-

gious disparities. A prescribed ritual order was used to inculcate an idealized version of Muslim society.[75] Moreover, while for some, the social environments of heaven and hell entirely erased earthly divisions based on such criteria as wealth, the otherworld was not a classless society. Both paradise and hell were envisioned as stratified, such that worldly social hierarchy was replaced with one based on righteousness and proximity to God.[76]

Rashid al-Din's view of the afterlife is also comprised of social divisions, based on the individual's moral conduct. In his third refutation, he explains that on the Day of Judgment, individuals will be collected and divided into groups according to their good actions, the categories of sins they have committed, their effort and rank. God will pass a single verdict on each group, picking from numerous grades of torment and bliss, in hell and heaven. The vizier highlights one of the blessed groups, the class of kings, the "Shadows of God on Earth" (see further chapter 4), who are rewarded in paradise for their praiseworthy deeds in governing the kingdom.[77]

For the Ilkhanid vizier, this socially stratified otherworld is moralistic, intertwined with the perfectionist hierarchy of souls he adopts from Razi. As chapter 4 shows, the vizier fuses the Ashʿarite, elitist, hierarchical approach to the knowledge of God and ethics with the Perso-Islamic political theory that demonstrates the kings' divinely deterministic and absolutist superiority. Accordingly, the special rank of the perfected souls of the sacral kings, which includes the soul of Rashid al-Din's Mongol patron the king Öljeitü, also retains, if it does not increase, its privilege and felicity in the afterlife.

This hierarchic order is apparent in one of the vizier's key passages on the *barzakh,* the state between death and resurrection. According to some traditions, as the spirit leaves the body, it travels to behold the seven heavens and seven hells, and journeys back to be reunited with the buried corpse. With the soul once again dwelling in or next to it, the corpse regains a semblance of life with consciousness in the grave. Next comes the first judgment, the inquisition of the grave, where two angels, Munkar and Nakir, ask the dead about his or her religion and question them on points of dogma. Most theologians believe that the soul remains in the grave in or next to the body until the Day of Resurrection. In accordance with one's lifetime of sins and good deeds, the corpse and soul experience the torture of the grave (ʿadhāb al-qabr), cleansing the soul from its sins until the Day of Judgment. In its life in the grave, the soul experiences the torture of its own private hell or the bliss of its own private paradise, a "charmed limbo." Its state in the grave reflects its actions during its lifetime, and the future that awaits it in the post-judgment heaven or hell.[78]

Rashid al-Din explains that all souls, whether perfect or deficient, first undergo the "hell" of the grave, but that their experiences of the torments of the grave vary widely. A select group of souls may be entirely spared. For these souls, being questioned by the eschatological angels constitutes their personal hell. When they

are released from the interrogation and are purified, they become perfect once again (in accordance with their rank). The ranks of their perfection can also vary. The perfection of a limited number of these souls is such that they are liberated immediately and entirely from experiencing the personal hell, and are sent directly to their personal paradise in the grave. For one individual whose perfection is of the highest possible kind—the Prophet Muhammad—the experience of paradise in the grave counts toward his "torment" there.[79] Indeed, as we will see in chapter 4, the vizier deems Öljeitü's perfect soul to occupy a unique rank, alongside the prophets and saints. This passage thus also alludes to the fate of the souls of the Chinggisid sacral kings. Rashid al-Din, in other words, charts an appealing afterlife onto which he projects his Chinggisid patrons' claim of exceptionalism.

CONCLUSION

Muslim visions and depictions of the afterlife emphasized the material conditions of the afterlife.[80] In the medieval Muslim eschatological imagination, earthly material pleasures and riches were amplified, featured alongside fantastic elements.[81] The Muslim materialist approach to envisioning the post-resurrection state had its appeal for the Mongols, certainly more than the Christian spiritual vision. Like other immanentist or tribal societies, the Mongols did not differentiate the afterlife from this world but considered them to be homologous. They buried their dead with horses, saddles, and other material properties they would need in the afterlife.[82]

A Dominican traveler to Mongol-ruled Iraq noted the conceptual affinity between the Muslim and Mongol vision of the afterlife. He stated that "the Tartars await a foolish resurrection which is the same as this corruptible life." The traveler further wrote that the Mongols would "murmur greatly against the Christians, saying that they are cruel and greedy because they do not provide their dead with money, food, or clothing." According to this author, along with the "laxity" of Muslim law and the generous gifts the Muslims promised the Mongol converts, the key to Muslim success in converting the Mongols was the affinity of the Muslim eschatological vision with that of the Mongol converts.[83]

From the physical resurrection to the socially segregated afterlife, in which the just kings are guaranteed an elevated position in paradise, Rashid al-Din's refutations indeed devised an afterlife experience relatable and exceptionally favorable to his Mongol patrons. Alongside this appealing and instrumental depiction of the fate of the soul, Rashid al-Din addressed the Buddhist theory of reincarnation based on a shared perfectionist foundation. He retailored previous arguments of Muslim theologians and philosophers regarding the body-soul relations to respond to the challenge posed by Buddhist reincarnation.

At issue, however, was not the Buddhist karmic theory's divergence from the vizier's Muslim stance on the physical resurrection but rather the two

traditions' conceptual affinity. Rashid al-Din differentiated between the Buddhist-reincarnationist and Muslim-resurrectionist approaches to the hereafter. From the Mongol perspective, resurrection or reincarnation must have seemed quite similar, especially compared to the heavily immanentist and materialistic understanding of the afterlife in the Inner-Asian Mongol tradition, on the one hand, and the philosophical view of the soul's journey after its departure as purely spiritual, on the other. Between these two extreme points of view regarding the afterlife, resurrection and reincarnation meet on a middle ground.

Indeed, to differentiate Muslim views on the afterlife from the Buddhist perception, the vizier taps into earlier, internal Muslim discussions seeking to better articulate the Muslim stance on the material or immaterial substance of the soul, and the kind of relationship it has with its physical frame. From his perspective, the most alarming implication of the belief in reincarnation is not the claim to the eternity of the soul, but that it cuts the "umbilical cord" connecting the soul to its specific body, a foundational aspect of the Muslim material resurrection. Reincarnation constitutes a significant component in the Buddhist method of domesticating and assimilating Chinggisid sacral kingship. As the next chapter shows, Rashid al-Din seeks not only to refute the Buddhist theory but also to experiment with a parallel Muslim model of righteous sacral kingship.

3
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Converting Fortune

*From Buddhist Cakravartins to Lords
of Auspicious Conjunction*

This chapter explores how Buddhists and Muslims in the service of the Mongol rulers employed their political-religious vocabularies to translate, accommodate, convert, and ultimately subvert their model of divinized kingship—specifically, the principle of the Chinggisid ruler's unique good fortune. By coupling Chinggisid auspiciousness with Islamic or Buddhist ideals, they sought to radically transform their patrons' immanentist kingship, displacing it with a constrained Muslim or Buddhist transcendentalist mode of righteous rulership.

In exploring this translation and conversion process, this chapter draws attention to the parallels between the Buddhist method of reframing Chinggisid kingship according to a model of universal karmic kingship (Cakravartin), and the Persian Muslim vizier Rashid al-Din's experimentation with a new mode of Islamic sacral kingship. Rashid al-Din's experiments with an Islamic sacral monarchy centered on his theological reinterpretation of the title Sahib Qiran, Lord of Auspicious Conjunction. Both Muslim and Buddhist interlocutors sought to ethicize the Mongols' deified kingship by imbuing it with new ethical-salvific imperatives. The re-rendering of Chinggisid auspiciousness with Buddhist or Perso-Islamic idioms also challenged, therefore, the source of the rulers' immanentist good fortune— the Mongols' sky deity, Tenggeri. These Muslim-Buddhist "equivalences" and additional indications further demonstrate that in his experimentation with new Islamic constructs of kingship, Rashid al-Din was informed by the Buddhist approach to the domestication of Chinggisid divinization, which he encountered through his own interactions with the Buddhists directly at court or indirectly, through the prior Buddhist inculcation of his royal patrons. Their exposure to Buddhism made the Ilkhanid rulers especially receptive to this approach.

THE CHINGGISIDS' IMMANENTIST AUSPICIOUSNESS

In the introduction we discussed the conceptual divide between immanentist traditions and transcendentalist religions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and philosophical Hinduism. Whereas the latter focus on individual salvation and universal ethics, the former are primarily concerned with harnessing supernatural or other forces to the here and now. In immanentist societies, the function of religious life is communal well-being, security, and earthly achievements, accomplished by ritual observation, rather than by the internalization of abstract moral principles as in transcendentalist religions.[1] In the Mongol case, Chinggis Khan was depicted as a virtuous ruler governing according to the *törü*, a system of steppe norms related to state building and communal relations. Abidance by the *törü* guaranteed Tenggeri's favor and Chinggisid success and security. These norms, however, were not related to the religion's soteriological aim, but to abundance and prosperity in this world; they were not seen as superior, universal truth claims that necessarily superseded and nullified all other religious truths.[2]

We further observed in the introduction that this distinction between immanentist traditions and transcendentalist religions is aligned with two opposing modes of sacral kingship. Immanentist societies deify kings by comparing them to gods or by highlighting their affinity with the divine. In transcendentalist religions, however, kings are depicted as the religion's righteous protectors. Unlike in a divinized monarchy, the authority of righteous kingship depended on the religious hierarchy: kings had to negotiate their status with a clergy that drew its authority from the same moral sphere.[3]

The Mongols subscribed to the former model of divinized kingship. The Chinggisid affinity with Heaven was commonly expressed in the formula, "By the Might of Eternal Heaven; by the Good Fortune of the Qa'an."[4] It asserted that Tenggeri selected Chinggis Khan and conferred on him its blessing and protection and therefore an exclusive mandate to universal domination. It also asserted that Chinggis Khan was in possession of a special form of good fortune that further confirmed Heaven's choice of him and his offspring, and guaranteed his predestined success as the fortunate universal emperor.[5] This Inner Asian notion of royal charisma had strong parallels with the Iranian concept of Royal Glory (*farr*). The latter, however, was primarily invested in the institution of monarchy, whereas the former was more attached to the specific individual.[6] Chinggisid auspiciousness was not determined by abstract universal qualifying measures of moral conduct, as in transcendentalist models of sacral kingship. There, the ruler's favorability with the divine was determined by his "righteousness," as defined by the clergy. The Chinggisids' good fortune, instead, was a tangible resource. It could be harvested, recharged, and redistributed, but also depleted or tampered with.[7]

The Mongols tapped into the spiritual residues and repositories of previous dynasties. They wisely established their new capital of Qaraqorum at a site shared by previous Inner Asian empires; Qaraqorum and other similar sites were considered basins of a latent "good fortune that was the fount of the success of earlier steppe polities," where primordial fortune lingered, waiting to be reclaimed. This fortune was "reactivated" when the new empire's political center was established. The Chinggisid rulers also acquired fortune by hiring, possessing, collecting, and circulating talented specialists and skilled artisans, as their ability to transform, manipulate, and produce items from raw materials was seen as having been imbued with a supernatural force.[8]

Chinggis Khan shared his special good fortune in return for loyalty. This was materially enacted in a continuous flow of expensive and symbolically charged gifts to the ruler's loyal retinue of allies. These gifts possessed an enhanced sacral value through their association with the emperor. His loyal imperial guard, the *keshig*, which meant "blessed" or "fortunate" in Mongolian, was a literal representation of this concept.[9] Chinggis Khan's special good fortune was also transferred to his family members through their relationship with him as the dynastic founder. The Chinggisid heirs, therefore, labored to cultivate and reinforce their ties to Chinggis Khan through a range of practices, from the personal imitation of his unique attributes (see chapter 4) to ancestral veneration (see chapter 5).[10] Linked to communal prosperity and well-being,[11] the king's auspiciousness also radiated outward, encompassing the realm under his rule. Any misfortune that befell the kingdom, therefore, raised the alarm, as it indicated the khan's potential dispossession of heavenly fortune. Transferred through a familial connection to Chinggis Khan, this divinized auspiciousness, however, also had to be empirically confirmed on an individual basis, through each ruler's success.[12]

BUDDHIST LETTERS TO THE KHAN: ETHICIZATION OF AUSPICIOUSNESS

In the previous chapter, we explored Rashid al-Din's arguments against metempsychosis and the proofs for physical resurrection in his three refutations. He also viewed these treatises as an opportunity to educate the Ilkhanid rulers about the Islamic perspective on the afterlife and to demonstrate its differences from the Buddhist dogma. That he addressed the issue in three separate treatises indicated that he viewed the Buddhist reincarnation as a major concern. The reason for Rashid al-Din's decision to devote such an effort to refuting the Buddhist dogma is found in the beginning of his first refutation. As we saw in the previous chapter, the vizier presented there the Buddhists' karmic system, explaining that they believed certain souls perfected themselves to such a level through cycles of rebirths that they ended up reincarnated in the auspicious bodies of kings and prophets. This

statement revealed one of the Buddhists' main advantages: by integrating Chinggisid kingship into the Buddhist system of reincarnation, they both reaffirmed the khan's divinely appointment but also converted and domesticated his deified kingship. Reincarnation functioned as a mechanism for transposing Chinggisid auspiciousness into an ethic system infusing Mongol rulership with righteous kingship.

The Buddhist theory of karmic rebirth was well equipped to entertain the Chinggisids' claim to this special good fortune. Like Christianity and Islam, Buddhism sought to establish the attainment of abstract transcendentalist objectives as superior to the more mundane goals immanentist traditions sought to secure. By envisioning cycles of desire and suffering, Buddhist traditions enunciated and inculcated the insignificance of material accomplishments.[13] The Buddhist karmic system, however, also provided a significant worldly upside, by drawing a connection between one's worldly fortune and one's karmic, and thus salvific, status. Social hierarchies, and therewith physical and material conditions of one's current rebirth, reflected one's karmic position.[14]

The letters sent by the Tibetan monk Togdugpa (d. 1267) to Hülegü, the founder of the Ilkhanate, as well as his brother Qubilai in China demonstrate how Buddhist monks employed this karmic system to convert Chinggisid good fortune into karmic currency and gain royal support. Togdugpa's Buddhist Kaygü suborder was in Hülegü's appanages in Tibet.[15] His letters show how the monk sought to nurture the general commitment of the two brothers and political allies to the Tibetan Buddhist cause, and specifically to his own Buddhist school.

In the letters, the future bliss of the Chinggisid overlords becomes intertwined with Buddhist ideals and practices, including ethical conduct, adherence to Buddhist rites, the correct understanding of the path to nirvana and the causes of the cycles of rebirths, and the generous support of Buddhist monastic centers and masters.[16] The letters also depict the need to perform actions related to government and rulership, which are inherently un-Buddhist, as a hurdle that can be easily overcome. For example, in a letter addressed to "the Boddhisattva prince Hülegü," whom the author praises for his Buddhist devotion and erudition, Togdugpa explains that owing to the large volume and wide repercussions of the deeds of kings, they may cause great suffering for others. However, he stresses, "there is no sinful deed and no virtue that cannot be purified if confessed in accordance with the sermons of the Teacher."[17]

In another letter to Hülegü—accompanied by a "blessed image" of Chenga (1175–1255), the author's saintly uncle and the abbot of Dirgung Monastery, with "a cloak once worn by the lama, as well as a protection wheel"—Togdugpa ascribes the world conquests of the Chinggisids to the family's accumulation of karma.[18] The Tibetan monk furthermore describes the rank attained by Hülegü as being the result of his merit in past lives and as one more step toward his rebirth as a fully awakened Buddha:

In general, these days, being born into a lineage of princes, you are one of great merit, but this is the result of having accumulated a great store of merit in past lives. Such roots of virtue have made you the lord of all the monks who are following Sakyamuni, and more specifically by taking ownership of this precious Kaygü school you have accumulated a great wave of accumulated merit [. . .]. Keeping virtue in the beginning, middle and end, the ritual services for the bodily health of the princely father and sons will result in great merit, such that there will be a transmission/ rebirth of only wheel-turning kings (Cakravartin kings) and it will serve as cause of one day becoming a completely awakened Buddha.[19]

The Cakravartin is the flipside of the "Buddha coin." According to the prophecy made before Siddhartha's birth, he was destined to become an enlightened Buddha or the Wheel-Turning King. Craig Reynolds explains that in this prophetic birth narrative, the "wheel" connotes "both the wheel weapon of the warrior king and the wheel of the Dharma, which the Buddha set in motion. The same vast amount of merit must accumulate in the previous lives of both beings, and identical miracles attend the birth of each . . . a persisting strain in myth and iconography that sees the Buddha as a world emperor *in potentia,* a sort of photonegative emperor."[20] The discourse of merit-based kingship transformed any ruler into a Cakravartin *in potentia.*[21] Moreover, it was a means of regulating the practice of kingship by presenting the monarch with a Buddhist righteous model of rulership.[22]

In Yuan China, the Cakravartin discourse provided a universalist model of imperial domination that transcended the Chinese discourses that limited imperial rule to the Chinese sphere of all under heaven.[23] This universalist message appears in *The Explanation of the Knowable* a Tibetan Buddhist guidebook written by Pakpa, for Prince Jin-gim. Chinggisid imperial rule is depicted there as the culmination of a long historical process of dissemination and flourishing of Buddhist teachings through the support of righteous kings—from India and Kashmir to Nepal and China, and particularly Tibet.[24] Pakpa not only compares Chinggis Khan to the Cakravartin; he also depicts Qubilai's and his son Jin-gim's support for Buddhism as representing continuity with the Chinggisid path, reaffirming their right to succeed to Chinggis Khan's throne through his son Tolui.[25] According to Pakpa, the flourishing of Buddhism under Yuan rule was a Chinggisid dynastic affair.

The appropriation of the potent Cakravartin continued under the Ming dynasty, which claimed to succeed Heaven's favor in China and Eurasia after the Yuan's collapse. Based on Qubilai's precedent, the Ming emperor Yongle (1360–1424) employed Confucian terms of sacral monarchy, referring to himself as the Son of Heaven, and further assigned himself the title Cakravartin, which was confirmed by his apparitions and dreams.[26] The Cakravartin discourse became another part of the Mongol legacy that the Ming now claimed, and it continued playing an important role in Mongol politics after the collapse of the Yuan and Ming

dynasties. Early modern Mongols in Mongolia developed a dual system of legiti-mation, according to which the khan not only was supported by his ritualized and divinized connection to the imperial ancestor Chinggis Khan, and thus to Heav-en's blessing, but also assumed the moral trappings of the Cakravartin.[27]

The Cakravartin had a long history as a vehicle for assimilating and displacing pre-Buddhist modes of divinized kingship, especially in Tibet.[28] While the dis-course of the universal Buddhist emperor was an effective way of translating Chinggisid universal claims, it also entailed a radical transformation of the Mon-gols' model of kingship, infusing it with righteousness. As in other divinized sys-tems, the Chinggisids' good fortune functioned "as an index of power rather than morality."[29] The translation of Chinggisid sacral kingship through the Buddhist idiom of karmic kingship presented, therefore, a significant "shift of focus from the ontological status of the king and his ability to capture supernatural power to the question of his moral authority."[30] As Cakravartin, the Chinggisid successor's status no longer hinged on his special connection with his ancestor Chinggis Khan, through whom Tenggeri's blessing was transmitted, or on his inheritance of the family's good fortune; it was instead dependent on the ruler's adherence to Buddhist ethics and rites. From the Chinggisid perspective, the appeal of the Cakravartin discourse was that it did not strip them entirely of their sacralized aura or eliminate their supernatural power; rather, it could be seen as reaffirming and reinforcing their claims. Yet the Cakravartin discourse also kept the rulers "in check," since it implied that Buddhist clergy could potentially threaten to desacra-lize the king's aura were he not to follow their moral prescriptions.[31]

RASHID AL-DIN'S THEORY OF FORTUNE

This "ethical contractualism,"[32] which bound political authority to moral conduct and the religion's salvific imperative, was also the norm for Muslim authors in Ilkhanid Iran. Like the Buddhists, Muslims also sought to cultivate among the Mongol elite Perso-Islamic political-ethical norms of government and patronage, as is shown by the rekindled interest in the production of lavish Shahnama copies at court, where authors, artists, and scribes fashioned the Mongol rulers into "Ira-nian kings in Mongol guise."[33] Reframing Chinggisid kingship according to the Shahnama model was a means of both legitimizing the new, foreign elite and pro-moting its acculturation to Iranian practices of government and perceptions of just rulership.[34] This dual function was also carried out through other media such as architecture, the popular genre of didactic advice literature, and poetry.[35]

Islamic concepts such as "good fortune" (*dawla*) and "divine support" (*taʾyid-i ilāhī*), as well as the Iranian notion of Royal Glory, were employed to refashion the Chinggisid rulers' unique auspiciousness in moral idioms.[36] Attributing royal glory or good fortune to the ruler also represented the claim of temporal authority

to autonomous and direct divine sanctification that bypassed the caliphate, while binding the ruler to ethical norms of government.[37] In Islamic didactic advice literature (also known as "mirrors for princes"), periods of dynastic and individual rule were embedded in cyclical rhythms of moral and social degeneration, followed by the revival of sociopolitical order under a new a righteous government.[38] The political failure of rulers and dynasties was thus understood in ethical terms.[39]

Rashid al-Din takes part in the dual Ilkhanid project of acculturating and legitimating the Mongol kings. In his *Compendium,* he writes of the kingly glory of the Hülegüid clan (*ūrūgh*), and he ascribes to Chinggis Khan the aura of heavenly assistance and Royal Glory (*farr-i shāhī*), comparing the Chinggisids' immense good fortune with the lesser favorability of the dynasties they vanquished.[40] Yet, in his theological treatises, he goes a step further, constructing a hierarchic system of Perso-Islamic categories of good fortune represented by terms borrowed from philosophy, astronomy, Iranian tradition, and theology.

In his final treatise in *Key to the Commentaries,* Rashid al-Din places these categories, which largely overlap each other in meaning, in an ordered system that leads progressively from the most general and commonly available category to the rarest and most distinct form of auspiciousness.[41] He uses the example of kingship to illustrate this hierarchical model. According to his model, in the first stage there is the individual with the most basic *capacity* and suitability for kingship. In the second stage of *happiness* the individual shares this slightly more exclusive quality with other commanders and chiefs of state. In the next stage, *fortunate constellation,* we have an individual who can prudently take advantage of the right moment to pursue his plan to be seated on the throne. When this individual wins over the favor of his peers, he is a potential king, and then "the signs of kingship shine from his forehead."[42] This individual then reaches a new stage of *good fortune.* Subsequently, we arrive at the *turn of fortune* (*dawla*), when the masses concede to his reign, and he is proclaimed ruler. The final rank, *divine favor,* pertains to an individual who retains the throne and successfully performs his tasks as monarch, until he enjoys a natural death in old age and peacefully bequeaths his throne to his son and heir.[43]

Rashid al-Din appropriates these terms from different fields of scholarship. He largely disassociates them from their original context, and reframes them within a new model of progressively increasing fortunate ranks. This hierarchical template draws on the Avicennan idea of the uneven distribution of the intellectual capacity to achieve theoretical knowledge (see chapter 2). Thus, the vizier establishes a model of gradually increasing and ever-more exclusive stages of fortune that explains royal success. This new model, moreover, removes from the Chinggisid unique good fortune its arbitrariness—its dependence on Heaven's random choices. Instead, it provides an explanation rooted in Islamic philosophy and theology that decisively hinges on divine providence and on the individual's meritorious conduct.

This experimental combination of different terms to theorize about royal fortune was meant to accommodate and transform the Chinggisid charisma. Yet the vizier may have also been motivated to experiment with this model in order to compete with the Buddhists' ability to translate and assimilate the Chinggisids' auspiciousness within their karmic model of kingship. In the previous chapter, we saw how the vizier carefully dismantled the Buddhist arguments for the soul's need to reincarnate in a new body to achieve perfection, while providing support for the Islamic view of bodily resurrection. Rashid al-Din's hierarchical model of good fortune intriguingly parallels the Buddhist karmic explanation of kingship. In both the Islamic and Buddhist cases, auspiciousness in this world testifies to the individual's moral standing. Yet whereas this fortune, in Buddhism, indexes the soul's accumulation of merit in the past lives that conditioned its current rebirth, in the Muslim Persian vizier's scheme, good fortune in this world indicates divine selection, and is conditioned on the individual's righteousness.

Rashid al-Din's treatise on the auspicious categories is part of the vizier's broader "response to Buddhism" in *Key to the Commentaries.* This is attested by the order and content of the treatises in this collection: the vizier's treatise on the auspicious categories is placed after Rashid al-Din's first refutation of reincarnation, and both these treatises appear after a series of treatises oriented around the theme of morality and the Islamic salvific imperative that spans the entire second half of the *Key.*[44] While his first refutation of reincarnation is the only treatise in the collection that directly addressed Buddhist beliefs, the content of the treatises in the *Key* suggests that the vizier may have tried to formulate a wider and more elaborate response to the Buddhist "hold" on translating, explaining, and converting the Chinggisids' exceptional good fortune.

Yet what indication do we have of the vizier's familiarity with the Buddhist karmic system of kingship and with the Cakravartin? Clearly, he was aware of the way the Buddhists embed royal authority within their theory of reincarnation. In the introduction to his first refutation, he explained succinctly the Buddhist theory of reincarnation and karmic kingship (see chapter 2) in a way that is in fact reminiscent of the Buddhist monk Togdugpa's letter to Hülegü. Furthermore, the *History of India* refers to the Buddhist presentation of kingship as another potential vocation of the Buddha. As noted in the previous chapter, in the *History,* Siddhartha's mother's dream is taken to mean that her son will rule the world, or, if he should follow the Buddhist path, become an idol the entire world is predestined to worship.[45]

Finally, the Cakravartin also makes a brief appearance in the *History of India.* In the section on Shakyamuni's prophecy about the future appearance of the Buddha Maitreya, the prosperous, paradise-like and utopian conditions on earth that will precede his emergence include a Cakravartin (*saqravard*) king, along with the "softness" of the earth (like feathers or cotton), the adorning of trees with valuable

stones, and a human life expectancy of eighty thousand years.[46] Whether Rashid al-Din was aware of the usage of the potent Cakravartin title as a mechanism for the ethicization of the Chinggisids' fortune or not,[47] in his later theological works he used an Islamic-Iranian title, Sahib Qiran, to similarly translate and reformulate Chinggisid auspiciousness, and moreover, assigned to the Sahib Qiran attributes that parallel those of the Cakravartin.

FROM STRANGER KINGS TO COSMOCRATORS: REGISTERS OF SAHIB QIRAN KINGSHIP

Rooted in the pre-Islamic Iranian conjunction astrology, according to which periodic planetary patterns predetermine politics, prosperity, and even the moral attitudes of rulers and dynasties, the title of Sahib Qiran indicated a ruler whose rise in fortune was decreed by celestial alignments. His birth or rise to the political or military stage coincided with and was preordained by a major planetary conjunction (*qirān*), most notably one between Saturn and Jupiter. The term Sahib Qiran was employed intermittently in panegyrics and poems, mainly in the courts of the Ghaznavids and Saljuqs.[48] It became prevalent in court circles from the fifteenth century onward, as the title was further entwined with the patrimony of Temür (r. 1370–1405) as world conqueror. Despite the astrologically rooted title's clear personal and nonhereditary nature, Temür's successors used the Sahib Qiran to buttress their sacral dynastic authority as heirs to his auspicious stature.[49] Its widespread appropriation became metonymic of a new discourse of sacral kingship fashioned through the Timurids' posthumous memory making.[50] The potent title was ascribed further millenarian overtones with the impending Great Conjunction of 1583 (991 AH), which marked the end of a 960 year-long cycle beginning in 571, around the time of Muhammad's birth, and therefore also overlapped with the turn of the second Hijri millennium. Privileged over other political-religious epithets, Sahib Qiran came to represent a new mode of early modern Islamic absolutism.[51] Like the Cakravartin, the appeal of the title lay also in its malleability and ahistoricity.[52] Since it made "explicit a worldview based on cycles of time" in which "historical time seemed to fold back upon itself,"[53] the potent Sahib Qiran could also fit any historical context.

Historians explored the royal appropriation of the title from the Timurid period onward. Yet the Sahib Qiran gained partial currency earlier, already at the Ilkhanid court, although its usage was still limited compared to subsequent imperial projects. In some instances, it was coupled with other potent titles, including that of the ultimate reformer, the Mahdi. These attested to an expanding Ilkhanid repurposing of Perso-Islamic titles to articulate the idea of the direct divine selection of Chinggis Khan and his successors.[54] The title was, moreover, given more freely in the Ilkhanid period, including to prominent individuals outside the political sphere. In

fact, in his panegyrics for his court patron Rashid al-Din, the Ilkhanid historian Vassaf assigned the title to the vizier himself.[55]

One figure associated with the title in Ilkhanid works was Anushiravan (531–79), the Sasanian paragon of philosopher-kingship.[56] In Rashid al-Din's view, Anushiravan was the model for the inquisitive and divinely intuitive ruler, whose example the Mongol king Öljeitü astutely followed.[57] Anushiravan was celebrated for holding poignant intellectual discussions and animated court debates, and for posing difficult questions. Rashid al-Din referred to Anushiravan as Sahib Qiran. He did not explain Anushiravan's association with the title but it might be linked to the Scorpio conjunction that took place during Anushiravan's reign. The conjunction in 571 AD, traditionally the year of the Prophet's birth, was considered to have foreshadowed the advent of Islam.[58] While Rashid al-Din interestingly did not reference this astral conjunction, he explicitly attributed Anushiravan's remarkably just and prosperous rule to Muhammad's mission, stating that the Prophet expressed his pride in being born during the age of the just Sahib Qiran Anushiravan.[59]

In his historical and theological writings, Rashid al-Din freely experimented with the title of Sahib Qiran, instilling it with new meanings that align it with the unique fortune of the Chinggisid family. He employed the Sahib Qiran as a hereditary title assigned specifically to the Ilkhanid dynastic line: Chinggis Khan, Hülegü, Ghazan, and Öljeitü were all Sahib Qirans in the *Compendium*.[60] Employing the Sahib Qiran thus served to reaffirm Chinggisid continuity and reinforce the Hülegüid line of succession leading to Öljeitü. The Sahib Qiran, in this case, complemented other means the vizier employed to legitimate and support the dynastic line descending from Ilkhan Arghun, such as depicting its members as monotheist-like infidels.[61]

Moreover, like the Chinggisid exceptional auspiciousness, the fortune of the Sahib Qiran materialized in two near-opposite royal personas: the ferocious world conqueror and the peaceful cosmic protector. In Chinggis Khan's case, good fortune awarded him invincibility and secured his heavenly mandate for world domination. Regarding the imperial founder, Rashid al-Din wrote: "in every epoch a great and mighty Sahib Qiran be singled out by heavenly assistance and garbed in a raiment of power to do away with that lassitude and degeneration." [62]

Rashid al-Din's depiction of Chinggis Khan as the divinely designated Sahib Qiran perfectly illustrates the blueprint of stranger kingship identified by Marshal Sahlins as a recurrent cross-cultural pattern. The stranger king is a barbaric outsider who overtakes the kingdom with brutal force and magic, but is subsequently domesticized and transformed into a benefactor, protecting, and expanding the kingdom. His brutality is employed to promote prosperity and justice and his sacredness and otherworldliness revitalize the kingdom.[63]

In the opening paragraph of the section on Chinggis Khan's biography in the *Compendium,* Rashid al-Din introduces a two-part historical schema that begins

with a penitential stage. A mighty, supernaturally reinforced Stranger-King, Chinggis Khan eradicates the moral degeneration of Muslim society, represented by the corrupt caliph himself. This is followed by the second, redemptive phase when Islamic law and the social-moral order are reestablished by the great-grandson of the same foreign king—the convert-convertor Ghazan.[64] The king of Islam (*Pādshāh-i islām*), emperor of mankind (*Shahanshāh-i anām*), and God's shadow (*ẓill Allāh*) on earth, Ghazan is cast as the restorer of Perso-Islamic civilization—the cosmocrator par excellence.

While Rashid al-Din uses the title of Sahib Qiran to encapsulate Chinggis Khan's immanentist, supernatural auspiciousness as the stranger king in Sahlins's sense, Ghazan's brother and heir Öljeitü is given the same title in the general introduction to the *Compendium,* not for his status as stranger king like his great-grandfather Chinggis Khan, but for his role as a cosmocrator-ruler. This, in fact, results in Rashid al-Din's unique suggestion: the Sahib Qiran as an epithet befitting a peaceful ruler. According to the vizier, the newly enthroned Öljeitü was a Sahib Qiran "the like of which had never been seen before—in no prior age" since his reign (*dawr-i salṭana*) was auspiciously attained, without shedding "a single drop of blood," and without the fierce interdynastic opposition his predecessors had met. Under Öljeitü's reign, the kingdom came under full control and perfect order.[65] The vizier contrasted Öljeitü's supposedly unopposed succession with the tumultuous successions of his brother Ghazan and their father Arghun, who purged "rebel" Hülegüid princes, some of whom appear to have had senior claims to the throne.[66] In Rashid al-Din's work, the fortunate Sahib Qiran Öljeitü's enthronement signaled the resolution of a two decade-long period of strife.

The vizier's fashioning of Öljeitü as a fortunate "nonviolent" Sahib Qiran stands in stark contrast to the title's more common use for world conquerors such as Alexander and Temür.[67] In fact, other Ilkhanid authors, who also assign Öljeitü that title, do so in relation to the latter's military feats. Court historian Qashani, for example, adorns him with the title following an overwrought description of his brave leadership of a small military force to victory over a massive Chagataid incursion in Tus in 1302. The author attributes this victory to Öljeitü's "sacred and pure soul" and "the power of [his] divine light." He argues that "every king who is adorned with these praiseworthy qualities can be a divinely aided [monarch] [*muʾayyad min ʿind Allāh*] and a Sahib Qiran."[68] Qashani is clearly aware that Öljeitü's military feats have hardly been on par with the mighty conquests of Chinggis Khan or other famed Sahib Qirans.[69] This perhaps explains his exaggerated description of Öljeitü's protection of the kingdom from the invasion of his Central Asian Chinggisid cousins.[70]

Rashid al-Din's interpretation of Öljeitü's status as Sahib Qiran is different. Öljeitü's unique auspiciousness is reaffirmed by his nonviolent, unopposed succession.[71] By using the same title for both "roles," Rashid al-Din obscures the radical change in the Chinggisid ruler's sacral status—from the immanentist to the tran-

scendentalist mode, and from the khan's auspiciousness as an index of his supernatural power to the same good fortune as the outcome of his moral authority. This reinterpretation strikingly parallels the way the Buddhists employed the Cakravartin for the Chinggisid rulers, infusing them with a righteous mode of kingship.

The depiction of Öljeitü as a nonviolent Sahib Qiran is also paralleled in the theory of the Cakravartin. Steven Collins suggests that there is a "utopian paradox of nonviolent kingship" represented by the Cakravartin in Theravada Buddhist thought. While kingship requires military force and legal punishment, inevitably involving the ruler in wrongdoing, the Cakravartin, on the contrary, is described as a Buddhist universal ruler who "transcends violence by conquering—nonviolently—the whole world." He miraculously establishes "his Perfect Moral Commonwealth such that no-one does wrong," obviating the need to forcefully punish its denizens.[72]

Was Rashid al-Din's experimentation with a nonviolent Sahib Qiran informed by the Cakravartin myth of the nonviolent emperor? The question whether the king can avoid karmic retribution for using "necessary" violence is discussed in the above-mentioned Buddhist monk's letters to Hülegü.[73] It also appears to have preoccupied Öljeitü's father, the Ilkhan Arghun, an avid patron of Buddhism.[74] One Muslim author who had participated in the Buddhist-Muslim debates at Arghun's court reported on the ruler's condemnation of the Muslims and Muhammad's *yasāq* (law) for its violent disposition toward jihad, contrasting Islam with the Buddha's precepts regarding the safeguarding of all forms of life.[75] If Buddhist efforts to inculcate the Chinggisids with nonviolent governance found an audience with Arghun, Buddhist ideas about nonviolent rulership may also have gained some standing with Öljeitü and Ghazan, both of whom were educated by Buddhist tutors.

Whether the path for the vizier's nonviolent Sahib Qiran was paved directly by the Buddhists or indirectly by the Mongol rulers' receptiveness to such ideas thanks to their Buddhist training, Öljeitü's uncontested succession as a sign of his auspiciousness marks another step in the interlinking of morality and Chinggisid good fortune. As the next section shows, Rashid al-Din takes this step, or rather leap, by continually interweaving morality (informed by and embedded in Islamic theology) and auspiciousness in his depiction of Öljeitü's virtues. He transforms the Ilkhan's persona into the "prototype" of his new model of Sahib Qiran kingship that possesses supernatural capacities, an outward-radiating good fortune, and superior moral standing.

RENAMING ÖLJEITÜ: AUSPICIOUSNESS IN THE *BOOK OF THE SULTAN*

Öljeitü's auspiciousness is a central theme in the vizier's introduction to his *Book of the Sultan*. This treatise remains insufficiently studied despite its exhaustive presentation of the vizier's theory of sacral kingship. Its stated goal is to answer the

questions presented by Öljeitü to a group of scholars in a 1307 debate at his mobile court in Gawbaru, near Mughan in today's Azerbaijan. His basic inquiry concerns prophethood: Why is revelation through the mediation of angels superior to direct communication with God?[76] The *Book of the Sultan* presents the Ilkhan's own response to this question as formulated by the vizier.

In the long introduction to this treatise, Rashid al-Din offers his most elaborate account of Öljeitü's unique rank of auspicious kingship and its relations to the Islamic stage of prophethood, outlining his program of establishing a new category of sacral kings anchored in Islamic theology and drawing on the Prophet Muhammad's superiority over other prophets. In the next chapter, we will explore how the vizier appropriates to this end Razi's model of human perfection, expanding it to include a new category of the sacral souls of the Chinggisid Sahib Qiran kings.

The introduction to the *Book of the Sultan* begins with a description of the main attributes of Öljeitü's unique status, and compares the rank of prophets to that of the perfect kings. Although none of the messenger prophets has received revelations as children, rare and miraculous things have occurred to them, indicating their special status. A similar attribute can be detected for a handful of just and wise, perfect and absolute kings (*muṭlaq pādshāhān*).[77] These Sahib Qiran rulers have an "intimate relationship [*khuṣūṣiyya*] and closeness to God," and are a divine instrument for "making great things happen." Moreover, they are the "centennial renewers" predicted by the Prophet (see chapter 4).

After a brief description of the miracles during the childhood of the prophets Muhammad, Yusuf, and Ibrahim,[78] the author proceeds to a very detailed account of the extraordinary occurrences and attributes anticipating Öljeitü's sacral kingship. Among these, we find Öljeitü's auspicious birth somewhere in the desert between Marv and Sarakh. According to the vizier, who attended the birth himself, Öljeitü's arrival in the world unleashed a divine downpour of rain that nearly drowned the entire royal camp, alleviating an ongoing drought.[79] The desert bloomed, and fodder appeared everywhere. The masses who witnessed the miracle began praising the infant, through whose auspiciousness "the dead world was revived." The newborn was appropriately named Öljei Buqa, or "Fortune Bull."[80]

Rashid al-Din presents the naming of the infant prince itself as a divine occurrence. He explains that some individuals who are divinely aided are not actually named by their parents, but that God has their names descend from heaven and "places them on the people's tongues."[81] Based on the Arabic proverb, "the titles are heaven-sent,"[82] he explains that a new name might be made manifest when the extraordinary attributes of divinely signaled individuals appear. This new name will better suit the status of this unique person. An example thereof is the prophet Ibrahim (Khalīl), first named Abram and then renamed Ibrahim, "father of the nations in Hebrew."[83] Rashid al-Din notes that the same phenomenon is also an attribute of the great Sahib Qiran rulers such as the Sasanian Jamshid, Afridun,

Iskandar, Anushiravan, —naturally—Chinggis Khan. Initially named Temüjin, the latter was later granted the Khitani title *j'aut-quri,* which, "in Chinese, means ruler of a kingdom." Next he was given the title *chingīzī,* which, "in Mongolian, means *the great king*." Finally, he was renamed "Chinggis Khan, that is, *great king of the kings* since *ching* means a singular king and *chinggīz* is the plural form."[84]

From Rashid al-Din's perspective, these examples demonstrate the significance of Öljeitü's renamings. As has been mentioned, his birth name was Öljei Buqa, but he was subsequently renamed Nicholas,[85] Temüder, Kharbanda ("mule/ass-driver"),[86] and Khudabanda.[87] Finally, he was offered the auspicious name Öljeitü Sultan since it befitted the good omens that appeared after his enthronement. These included his restoring of order to the kingdom's affairs and the historical peace accord concluded between the Mongol khanates after five decades of constant conflict.[88]

Rashid al-Din also finds a creative way to refer to the Ilkhan's praiseworthy character, and he takes this opportunity to point out his own intimate standing with the ruler and the contribution to validating his unique rank. When presenting Öljeitü's birth story, the vizier simply declares his presence at the camp at the time. However, regarding Öljeitü's renaming after his enthronement, Rashid al-Din takes on a more prominent role. When a number of amirs suggested that the prince be named Öljeitü on his enthronement, the humble prince was initially hesitant, since he feared this title could lead him to conceit. Yet Rashid al-Din convinced him that it was God's will that he takes on this new name by demonstrating that God had already inserted this name into Rashid al-Din's mind before the amirs came up with it. The vizier brought the ruler a work he had previously composed,[89] and showed him that the proposed name, "Öljeitü," had already been divinely injected into the vizier's "ink."[90]

Öljeitü's names marked shifts in the prince's religious affiliations, or rather, indications of his accumulation of religious blessings and initiations:[91] from his Buddhist training in childhood to his Christian-Nestorian baptism at the age of eight ("Nicholas") to his conversion to Islam ("Khudabanda," God's slave).[92] His first (Öljei Buqa) and last name (Öljeitü) indicated his Mongol auspiciousness, empirically manifested in his miraculous birth, and equally in his extraordinarily peaceful ascension to the throne. His renaming as Öljeitü thus became a rite of passage, not only from princehood to kingship, but also to a new level of royal good fortune.

Mongol patterns of auspiciousness play a significant role in the choice of Mongol names.[93] The Buddhist monks also had a role in the politics of naming among the ruling Mongol elite. From the 1250s, Tibetan Buddhist teachers gave Sanskrit and Uyghur names to members of the Chinggisid household and the ruling Mongol elite, in both Yuan China and the Ilkhanate. Arghun's brother and successor Geikhatu (r. 1291–95), for example, was granted the Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhist

name Rinchen Dorjé ("Jewel Diamond"), symbol of Tantric sacred knowledge and power. According to the Ilkhanid historian Vassaf, Chinese Buddhist ritual experts decreed that this name had to appear on royal letters and coins to guarantee the longevity of Geikhatu's reign,[94] as was indeed done.[95] Whether Geikhatu was granted this name on the eve of his investiture, as is assumed by some scholars, or previously during a Buddhist initiation, is not clearly conveyed by Ilkhanid sources, although they do indicate that Geikhatu identified himself as a Buddhist monarch, continuing the Hülegüid tradition of Buddhist royal patronage.[96] Vassaf, in any case, clearly voices the Buddhist opinion that public employment of the Buddhist name on the state's symbols of authority was a guarantee of the resilience and fortune of Geikhatu's reign.

Buddhist rituals and initiations employed "the technology of name-giving to accompany the making of various classes of vows."[97] Renaming was a transformative, even coercive, act that bestowed and enforced specific meanings while effacing others. The act of naming granted the namer power over the named.[98] Renaming could establish, reaffirm, or challenge hierarchies and authorities. By "renaming" Geikhatu, the Buddhists employed their own conception of karmic merit, situating it above Geikhatu's Mongol name. They thus presented this new Buddhist name as a "technology" superior to the Chinggisid conception of inherited good fortune.

Öljeitü's choice of a Mongolian "throne name" over an Islamic or Persian title and, moreover, one aligned with the Chinggisid notion of Heaven-derived auspiciousness, was probably a marker of continuity with his brother and predecessor Ghazan. The latter's coinage showed his enduring tendency for Heaven-related ideological symbols, despite his conversion to Islam. Öljeitü's coinage, on the other hand, did not exhibit the same "Mongolian" markers and language as his brother's, conveying instead the sultan's Islamic identity.[99] This choice of a Mongolian (rather than Buddhist or Muslim) ascension name seems to have propelled Rashid al-Din to take a significantly different approach from that of the Buddhists in relation to Öljeitü's renaming.[100] The vizier "reclaimed" the meaning of this new name, not only by presenting his own contribution but also by assigning the decision to God. He associated Öljeitü's name-derived auspiciousness with the ruler's morality and piety. Put differently, Öljeitü's auspiciousness was no longer solely an index of the khan's supernatural power or of Heaven's support of his rulership, but instead became sacralized through Muslim ethical norms of kingship.

Rashid al-Din is committed to the theme of Öljeitü's moral auspiciousness throughout his description of the king's remarkable feats. Öljeitü's auspiciousness in the *Book of the Sultan* also echoes the vizier's representation of the Ilkhan in the *Compendium*: among the unique qualities attributed thereto is his enthronement without a single "bloody nose."[101] This furthermore characterizes his entire reign: "the commanders of his venerable father and of his venerable brother, as well as his own men" all proved trustworthy and "prayed day and night for his good fortune."[102]

Öljeitü's auspiciousness further manifested itself in his kin. Among his remarkable feats listed by Rashid al-Din was his marriage to the auspicious Qonggirat Eltüzmish Khatun by order of Ghazan (albeit sanctioned through divine command). She was the most senior matrilineal descendant of Chinggis Khan, and had in her possession a great camp (*yurt*).[103] She was a capable and wise spouse, and a friend to Öljeitü; she gave birth to three of his sons. Interestingly, Rashid al-Din does not mention that she was also the widow of both Abaqa and Geikhatu, Öljeitü's grandfather and uncle, respectively. Her marriage to prince Öljeitü was owing to the Mongol practice of levirate, which was not sanctioned by Islam.[104] This marriage did, however, reinforce Öljeitü's claim to his legitimate Chinggisid succession. According to Rashid al-Din, their union guaranteed and signaled the dynasty's repute, bliss, longevity, and prosperity. Indeed, Öljeitü's auspiciousness radiated outward, protecting the entire realm, preventing droughts and a rise in the price of grain, even though, during his reign, Saturn was on the rise, indicating an increase in food prices. Thus, Öljeitü's fortune buffered the inauspicious influence of "one of the greatest celestial bodies."[105]

One of the strategies employed to reassign Öljeitü's auspiciousness from the immanentist and empirical to the transcendentalist and righteous mode is reclassifying these feats as "miracles" (*karāmāt*), a term often ascribed to figures of saintly stature.[106] In this case, however, the word "*karāmāt*" is used not only to attribute a saintly status to Öljeitü but also to clearly differentiate between the Ilkhan's performance of miracles by virtue of both his "ranks of sainthood [*vilāyat, ṣāḥib karāmāt*] and rulership [*ūlū al-amrī*]" or Sahib Qiran kingship,[107] and the prophetic rank, associated with a different type of miracles (*muʿjaz*) (see also chapter 4).

The transcendentalist sacralization of Öljeitü's kingship is also embodied in the general organization of the *Book of the Sultan.* As mentioned, this work begins with his miraculous birth. The description of Öljeitü's unique royal example is followed by an extensive discussion of prophethood in general, specific prophetic ranks, and the differences between revelation and divine inspiration. The treatise concludes with a description of the reward and punishment in the afterlife, and the resurrection. This core treatise (*aṣl*) is followed by two continuations (*zayl*), which appear in alternating order in various manuscript versions: the "Branches of the Prophets" (*shuʿab-i anbiyāʾ*); a genealogical tree of the prophets and caliphs (see chapter 4);[108] and the vizier's second refutation of metempsychosis, "The Precious Thoughts."[109] In this treatise on the afterlife we find the vizier specifically highlighting the auspicious fate and blissful experiences that await the souls of some of the perfected individuals: "the souls of the prophets, the saints, the perfect kings, the scholars and the elite differ greatly from the souls of the commoners in relation to their primal nature" and "their capacity" to achieve perfection, which naturally bears on their happiness in the hereafter.[110]

Stefan Kamola suggests that by bookending his bipartite *Compendium* with accounts of Öljeitü's life and reign, the vizier seeks to present the Ilkhan as standing "outside history itself." The *Compendium* becomes a "geographically universal vision of Öljeitü as a patron and sovereign."[111] The two "ends" of the *Book of the Sultan*, however, register a shift in the king's auspiciousness from this world to its blissful afterlife, anchoring his good fortune further within the Islamic sphere of morality and salvation. The vizier's elaborate defense of Muhammad's superior prophetic rank, moreover, is itself bookended by Öljeitü's favorable lifecycle, from his auspicious birth to his privileged afterlife. Finally, the *Book* must also be read for its decisive message against Buddhist reincarnation. The vizier chooses to conclude this discussion of Öljeitü's sacral kingship and Muslim prophethood with his anti-Buddhist disputation. The treatise reframes Öljeitü's Islamic sacralization within the larger project of refuting Buddhism and offering the Chinggisids an enchanted Islamic hereafter, a favorable alternative to the cycle of meritorious rebirths offered by the Buddhist monks.

"TOPPLING TENGGERI": MONOPOLIZATION OF HEAVEN

The ethicization of Chinggisid sacral kingship is pursued with further gusto in Rashid al-Din's third refutation, which is titled "The falsity of reincarnation" (*buṭlān-i tanāsukh*).[112] In this treatise he further develops the idea of Öljeitü's ethical immunity to the inauspicious influence of the celestial sphere. Rashid al-Din discusses here this Qurʾanic verse: "Those who deny Our signs and are arrogant toward them—the gates of Heaven will not be opened for them . . ." (7:40). He rejects the idea that the verse speaks of actual doors in heaven and claims it refers specifically to the worldly punishment and torment of those committing the sin of arrogance. The "gates of heaven" (*abwāb al-samāʾ*) are interpreted as a reference to the celestial constellations interlinking astrological and ethical explanations for an individual's fortune in this world and the next. Importantly, through this discussion, Rashid al-Din charts a hierarchical model that subjects the stars and moon to the superior power of the prophet-informed Muslim order of reward and punishment.

While celestial constellations and the course of heavenly bodies might determine an individual's fate, Rashid al-Din explains, their influence on a person's life depends on that person's moral conduct. For one who commits many grave sins, such as, for example, arrogance, even if "the auspicious stars assist him, it would be like the gates of heaven are closed to him since due to his great many evil deeds, the gaze of the auspicious stars would leave no [favorable] trace on his state." The vizier compares this to a metal blade (the auspicious heavenly arrangement) striking something extremely hard (sinful conduct) without so much as leaving a dent

on the surface. Thus, moral differences explain why two individuals can meet very different fates despite having nearly identical horoscopes.[113] While arrogance is the worst possible sin, humble individuals focus the gaze of the fortuitous stars so that even a small portion of heavenly fortune goes a long way for them.

Rashid al-Din's bold astrological interpretation of the Qur'anic phrase "gates of heaven" takes a surprising turn when he interrupts his own discussion thereof with an account of Öljeitü's unannounced, late-hour visit to his tent in 1311, when Öljeitü intruded on the vizier at the very moment he was writing about the verse. The vizier assigns this fortunate visit to a divine reaffirmation of the blessing owed to him for writing this refutation of the false Buddhist belief in reincarnation. By order of the king, Rashid al-Din begins reading from the treatise but, on reaching the sharp blade metaphor, his reading is interrupted by Öljeitü's question: "What could possibly be sharper than the blade?"

We need to pause and ponder the Ilkhan's question. I suggest it is indicative of the Ilkhan's own understanding of his nocturnal discourse with the vizier, and likely other intellectual exchanges at court, in terms of his Buddhist upbringing. He appears to situate Rashid al-Din's metaphors in the traditional context of Buddhist dialogues, a central tenet of Buddhist teachings. In fact, Öljeitü's riddle parallels ones that appear in the Buddha-angel dialogue included in the *History of India*.[114]

Rashid al-Din uses Öljeitü's question to further advance his earlier argument. The vizier applies his astral-ethical theory to his Chinggisid overlords and argues that the moral standing of their souls makes them immune to the impact of inauspicious heavenly bodies: "the sacred perfect souls, like the souls of the prophets, saints and the kings who are Sahib Qirans" are sharper than a blade. Examples of these Sahib Qiran kings are "your excellent ancestor Chinggis Khan and his offspring, the King of Islam"—that is, Öljeitü. These souls are so morally perfect that "stars leave no trace on them, and therefore, the celestial bodies [*aflāk*] have no authority over them and they pay no attention to them." Furthermore, "some of the perfect souls are more perfect and nobler than the celestial bodies and they have reached such high appreciation from God that, they have the ability to leave a mark on the heavens and the stars." The vizier uses Muhammad's miracle of splitting the moon (*inshiqāq-i qamar*) as evidence, noting that the Sahib Qiran kings likewise have a special property: their reign extends over long periods and things happen according to their will, not according to celestial omens. Righteous sacral kings that they are, their morality makes them masters of their own fortunes.[115]

This statement about the Muslim king's moral superiority over the celestial forces is amplified by the vizier's inversion of the meaning of Sahib Qiran in his answer to Öljeitü's query. The title refers to a king whose rise in fortune is predicted and decreed by celestial bodies. However, rather than an indication of the ruler's subjection to the celestial whims and to the natural course of the stars and the heavens, the Chinggisid Sahib Qirans, according to Rashid al-Din, are true

astral lords, who are impervious to ominous constellations.[116] Rashid al-Din is not content with simply liberating his patrons from the tyranny of the heavens; rather, he strikes at the very heart of the Chinggisids' fortune: Tenggeri. He does this by associating in his answer to Öljeitü the ruler's celestial immunity with the Prophet's miraculous splitting of the moon.

The Mongol conquerors were interested in procuring various technologies that would enable them to read the celestial vault and prognosticate the future and thus identify Tenggeri's will. They invested resources in assembling at their courts a variety of experts in the fields of astronomy and astrology, alongside other "futurologists."[117] Tenggeri was not an abstract or transcendental heaven as in the case of monotheistic religions, but rather an empirical reality, the firmament. Tenggeri did not transcend the heavenly dome; it was not "anything beyond or other than heaven proper, that is, the totality of celestial systems."[118] Further, while this empirical heaven governed the earth and decided the destiny of men, it was morally ambiguous, not bound by any universal system of good and evil, salvation and damnation. Tenggeri's "otherworldliness" was not transcendental, since this otherworldliness did not prevent it "from being immanent in nature."[119]

Yet, when transcendentalism took over, Tenggeri was sidelined. According to Biran Baumann, the adoption of Buddhism in Yuan China and later in Mongolia marked the end of "Chinggis Khan's Heaven." As Buddhism's hold deepened and its reach expanded among the Mongols, Heaven could no longer exist; it was transcended by a morally unambiguous and abstract heaven. The Mongols no longer governed through Chinggis Khan's unique affinity with Tenggeri. Instead, their rule depended on their abiding by Buddhist rites, universal codes of ethical conduct, and salvific schema.[120]

The same process is evident in this treatise by Rashid al-Din. The heavenly bodies, the stars and moon, which exert their influence and will over the fate of men, stand in for Tenggeri. Through their moral aptitude, the Sahib Qiran Chinggisid kings become immune to Tenggeri's power. Furthermore, by linking in this treatise the Chinggisids' auspiciousness, now ethically grounded, to Muhammad's miracle of splitting the moon, the vizier transforms the debate into an empirical duel. As the Prophet shatters and desecrates the moon, so he essentially topples Tenggeri. By staging this empirical competition over which supernatural power is superior, the vizier reveals his understanding that to convince his patrons of Islam's superiority, he must first validate its dominance in immanentist terms, through empirical demonstrations of power, before mobilizing Islam's truth claims.[121]

As we will show in the next chapter, Rashid al-Din also refashions Öljeitü into a Muhammad-like king by attributing to him traits similar to the Prophet's. Öljeitü, in other words, becomes the Prophet's royal proxy, his partner in an act of monotheistic "iconoclasm" that reclassifies the Mongolian Heaven as empirically and ethically inferior to Islam's transcendentalism.[122] Put differently, the vizier trans-

forms the auspicious Chinggisid Lord of Conjunction himself—a title denoting Heaven's control over human fate—into Tenggeri's victorious rival. The Mongols' empirical religiosity is harnessed to trigger a form of "auto-iconoclasm,"[123] leading the Mongols to turn on their own metapersons and the very symbols that are at the heart of Chinggisid sacral kingship.

I suggest that Tenggeri's "defeat" by the Muslim prophet also marks a transition from the immanentist pattern of intercultic transparency and translatability (and thus nonexclusivity) to religious exclusivity and transcendental intransigence—that is, resistance to future religious conversion.[124] As we learned in the introduction, the Mongols saw no contradiction between their own religious and cultural integrity and cross-cultural borrowing. Immanentist societies draw social distinctions between their own and other cults, but they also identify equivalences between specific metapersons and gods across religions. Instead of setting boundaries between religions, they assume that religions function as a means of intercultural translatability.[125]

Rashid al-Din aimed to displace the immanentist pattern of religious transparency and religious inclusion with monotheist exclusion, and thus achieve a Mongol conversion in the transcendentalist sense. Buddhism might have allowed the Mongols to continue adhering to a dual religiopolitical framework of Tenggeri's blessing (the cult of Chinggis Khan) and the Dharma.[126] Monotheism, however, is about cultural estrangement and exclusion, not interchangeability, translation, and inclusion. Jan Assmann refers to this as the "Mosaic distinction," by which logic all other gods are inherently false and "false gods cannot be translated."[127] The Muslim vizier therefore makes his own "Muhammadan distinction" in his answer to the Ilkhan.

Intertwined with Rashid al-Din's monopolization of heaven is the inculcation of a new, transcendentalist outlook in the Mongol rulers. The Prophet's (physical and spiritual) transcendental ascension (*miʿrāj*) carries special significance in the vizier's theological writing,[128] just as the pictorial representation of the *miʿrāj* does in the manuscripts of the *Compendium*. During the fourteenth century, the *miʿrāj* tale became a didactic, moralizing narrative. Riddled with allegories and teaching statements, accounts of the Prophet's *miʿrāj* blended "a sermonic character" with "audience-driven entertainment to form a powerful tutorial on the superiority of Islam and its basic tenets."[129] The story of Muhammad's ascension, transcending the visible firmament to reach the divine abode, served as another means of steering the Mongol elite away from immanentism and toward transcendentalism.

Rashid al-Din's monotheistic demotion of Tenggeri parallels the shifts in the Ilkhanid perception of natural disasters during the two decades following the Ilkhanate's official embrace of Islam in 1295. From markers of Tenggeri's will or Heaven's dissatisfaction, they instead became signs of moral deterioration. A severe thunderstorm in 1298 deterred the Ilkhan Ghazan and his men from carrying out their military campaign in Syria;[130] and a decade later, a lightning storm

that killed several of Öljeitü's companions propelled several amirs and shamans to try, unsuccessfully, to convince the ruler of Heaven's dissatisfaction with the khan's choice of the Muslim faith.[131] Yet when a deadly hailstorm struck the city of Sultani-yya in 1320, the disaster was seen as a sign of God's rage over the ruler's failure to maintain his subjects' morality. Following the advice of his Muslim jurists, Öljeitü's son, Ilkhan Abu Saʿid (r. 1316–35), ordered the enforcement of puritan reforms throughout the kingdom. Brothels and taverns were shut down, public displays of repentance and piety were carried out, and old mosques were renovated.[132] Natural disasters were no longer empirical indications of Heaven's displeasure; instead, they represented condemnation of the ruler's or community's moral corruption.

CONCLUSION

After Ghazan's conversion to Islam in 1295, a new formula appeared on Ilkhanid edicts. Instead of the might of Eternal Heaven and the good fortune of the Ching-gisid khan, royal decrees were now read by the might of Allah and the auspicious-ness of Muhammad's believers (*mayāmin al-milla al-muḥammadiyya*).[133] A similar process took place in Rashid al-Din's Perso-Islamic translation project and his radical ethicization of the Chinggisids' good fortune. Instilling his Mongol patrons' auspiciousness with transcendentalist righteousness, the vizier set out to translate, reconceptualize, and domesticate the Mongols' model of divinized kingship. He mobilized his translation of Chinggisid auspiciousness to moralize Mongol divin-ized kingship and to further associate it with Islam's salvific imperative, and he creatively reinterpreted the title of Sahib Qiran to that end. Rashid al-Din further-more lashed out against the Mongols' Eternal Heaven, Tenggeri, to inculcate in the Mongols a transcendentalist outlook that overpowered and moved beyond their Heaven. As will be seen in the next chapter, Muslim kingship—in order to disen-chant the Mongolian Heaven and to disarm its immanent lure—(paradoxically) had to be "reenchanted" and sacralized by further detaching it from the world and cosmos. Mongol kingship was instead attached to the Muslim salvific imperative, signaling the transition from sacralized politics to moral religion.

King of Kalam

Öljeitü's Theological Domestication

The *Book of the Sultan* ends with the "Branches of the Prophets" (*Shuʿab-i anbiyāʾ*), a genealogical chart presenting the prophetic-caliphal history, first in the format of a long, detailed list, and subsequently in the format of a family tree.[1] In the preface to the "Branches," Rashid al-Din explains that he has invented the tree design to effectively describe the prophetic ranks.[2] Using color and geometrical coding, the vizier enables the viewer to swiftly and accurately identify the rank, status, and ancestry of each prophet.[3]

Kings are also given their own symbol—a red circle. Yet why include nonprophetic monarchs in a tree dedicated to the prophetic lines? Rashid al-Din is aware that his decision to include several nonprophetic kings may raise questions, and he explains this in a comment next to the red circle around Hermes's name, identified here as an offspring of Japheth, and as the elusive Qurʾanic figure of Dhu al-Qarnayn.[4] Whereas kings have generally "remained outside the pillar of the lineage," Hermes and three others[5] have been included following an explicit request by the Mongol king Öljeitü. He "ordered that we examine their lineage and states, which of the kings was righteous [*ṣāliḥ*] and which is mentioned in the glorious Qurʾan."[6] Rashid al-Din's comment suggests that Öljeitü has ordered the investigation of the status of kings mentioned in the Qurʾan after inspecting the tree. However, the author does not tell us what has led Öljeitü to intervene. Was Öljeitü trying to understand the place of kingship in relation to prophethood?

In the previous chapter, we explored Rashid al-Din's radical ethicization of the Chinggisids' unique good fortune in the introduction to the *Book of the Sultan*. This work, which sprouted from Öljeitü's curiosity and the questions he presented to scholars in 1307, addressed extensively the topic of prophethood in Islam—from

the types of revelation and communication with God to the different ranks of the prophets and the finality of prophethood. In his introduction to this work, Rashid al-Din explored at length Öljeitü's unique rank of auspicious kingship and its relations to the Islamic rank of prophethood, and he outlined his program of establishing a new rank of sacral kings anchored in Islamic theology and drawing on the Prophet's superior position vis-à-vis other prophets. Hence, Öljeitü's supposed desire to situate kings in the genealogy of prophethood matched Rashid al-Din's concern in the introduction: Where did kingship fit in Islam's scripturally anchored religio-political hierarchies? Or, to put the question differently, what position could Islam afford the convert Chinggisids, who were required to relinquish their claim to divinized sacral kingship?

The "Branches of the Prophets" offered an initial answer: royal righteousness. Rulers, too, could play a leading role in the Islamic salvific history through the emulation of the righteous standards of these four kings. Another role model for rulers was Muhammad himself. Rulership and prophethood were intrinsically interlinked in Islamic thought—from the philosophically oriented to the court-historical writings. Farabi, for example, fused Platonic thinking on the perfect philosopher-king with Islamic views of the prophet as lawmaker and communal leader to mold the Prophet's figure as the embodiment of the perfect leader.[7] And Persianate court historians in the Delhi sultanate crafted literary images of their rulers that assimilated their figures with the prophetic example. They praised them as bearers of the Prophet's virtuous qualities, overtly referring to their patrons as the "Seal of the Sultans."[8] The Prophet was used as a literary and scholarly apparatus for a "complex aesthetic scaffold" that imbued Islamic sovereignty with "particular forms of representation, aesthetic and political."[9]

This chapter explores some of the ample discursive resources Rashid al-Din employed toward the accommodation and transformation—the radical ethicization—of his patrons' divinized kingship: first, his fashioning of the Mongol ruler Öljeitü into a sultanic simulacrum of the Prophet based on the ruler's rationalist intellect and divinely granted inspiration; second, the synchronization of Öljeitü's reign with Islamic salvific time, and his transformation into an Islamic reformer king, based on the prophetic tradition of the centennial renewer (Mujaddid). As will be seen below, the vizier imbues the image of his patron with a righteous mode of kingship by demonstrating and elaborating on several parallels between the Mongol king and the Prophet: their ethical "proximity" and intimacy with God; the gradual progression of their intellects toward full divine inspiration (in the case of Öljeitü) or revelation (in the case of the Prophet); their similar capacity to perfect the intellects and morals of their deficient subjects; and finally, their shared "illiteracy," which marks their unique level of divinely given intuitive knowledge.

As with the vizier's experimentation with the Sahib Qiran title discussed in the previous chapter, the making of Öljeitü's Muhammad-like kingship also has parallels with the Buddhist model of universal emperorship. Cakravartin kingship similarly elevates rulers by associating them with the Buddha, on the one hand, while situating the same kings in an inferior position to the Buddha and the religious hierarchy, on the other hand.[10] While the same amount of karma accumulated in past cycles is needed for one to become the Buddha, and while similar miraculous signs are found in the birth of both the Cakravartin and the Buddha, the Cakravartin has relatively limited power, his subordination speaking to the competition between the Buddhist monastic order and the political and military power of the ruler.[11]

Rashid al-Din similarly uses the parallels between Öljeitü and the Prophet to communicate and reaffirm the subordination of the rank of sacral kingship to Muhammad's prophethood. By offering Öljeitü a new mode of sacral, righteous kingship, ranked above the saints but below the prophets; and moreover, by creating for him the new position of the prophesied reformer king, Rashid al-Din fashions an appealing package that would constrain his patron's divinized impulses through their theological domestication.

KNOWLEDGE AND INTUITION: ÖLJEITÜ AS UNLETTERED PRODIGY

In his Qur'anic exegesis, Razi argues for the compatibility of human reason or knowledge obtained through rational means with the "transmitted knowledge" (*naql*), which pertains to statements included in the Qur'an or in prophetic traditions. Seeking to close the gap between the two through an allegorical reading of the Qur'an, Razi argues for the priority of reason over transmitted knowledge when the apparent sense of scripture contradicts reason.[12] In his theological treatises, Rashid al-Din likewise argues for the superiority of reason,[13] and he depicts Öljeitü's intellect as the judge of human reason. Öljeitü represents the epitome of the human intellect and the champion in a campaign for the superiority of reason in his court. The vizier describes the king ordering that all who speak out before court audiences must guarantee that their speech is "rational, reasonable, and undeniable, or else, it will be deemed unacceptable."[14]

Yet Öljeitü's penchant for reason is matched by his preference for innovation over stagnation or uncritical replication. According to Rashid al-Din, the Ilkhan can effortlessly produce new intellectual insights that astound even the brightest of scholars. In his introduction to *The Treasure Book of the Ilkhan on Chinese Science and Techniques,* a Persian translation of Chinese medical works, Rashid al-Din links this translation project to Öljeitü's interest in procuring and making available "books and the benefits that had not been available beforehand in this

kingdom"—namely, Iran.[15] He links Öljeitü's capacity to intuitively produce new intellectual insights to an innate quality: "the king of Islam is aided by God, and every benefit that he delivers abounds from the inventions of [his own] luminous royal nature, through the power of natural knowledge and divine guidance."[16]

Intuitive or natural knowledge (*ʿilm-i fiṭrī*) is one of the central concepts Rashid al-Din appropriates to speculate about and to define Öljeitü's unique intellectual capacity. He contrasts this intuitive, axiomatic knowledge with the inferior form of knowledge that is acquired by learning from books or teachers (*ʿilm-i muktasabī*).[17] Rashid al-Din's approach is informed by Razi's Avicennan argument for the necessity of prophecy owing to the natural continuum of human capacity, which culminates in individuals possessing perfect faculties and intellectual-moral perfection.[18] In *Subtle Truths,* for example, he defines "natural knowledge" as a primordial type of knowledge that God teaches human beings at their creation. Although all individuals are endowed with a share of God's teaching, "divine effluence [*fayż*] is distributed to each individual in accordance with his state [and] in agreement with his capacity and aptitude . . . and there is the possibility of a great variety in this."[19] Razi likewise postulates that "all acquired [*muktasab*] knowledge will depend on self-evident [*badīhī*] knowledge that the mind knows immediately and spontaneously, not by choice," implying that its origins are divine.[20]

In *Explication of the Truths,* Rashid al-Din describes Öljeitü's unique ability to challenge the scholars attending his court, including the vizier himself. Despite having reached the formidable age of sixty-two, having served under several kings, and having benefited from "the rays of their internal royal light" and the company and wisdom of many great shaykhs and scholars, Rashid al-Din is still impressed by his current patron. For Öljeitü, he argues, possesses a higher level of perfect kingship and therefore perfect reason, knowledge, and admirable personal traits.[21]

Öljeitü's ability to surpass and baffle the wisest of the scholars, despite his lack of earlier training in the Islamic sciences, not to mention his illiteracy, warrants explanation. Rashid al-Din resolves this by resorting to the difference between natural and acquired knowledge. According to the vizier, Öljeitü's higher level of natural knowledge explains many of the Ilkhan's unique intellectual properties. The Prophet Muhammad's own illiteracy is central to this explanation. Thus, Rashid al-Din resorts to the Prophet's example of perfect, divinely granted intellect—expressed in his "illiteracy"—when he seeks to resolve the problem posed by the scholars' amazement regarding Öljeitü's intellectual superiority:

> It is proved that man cannot exist without reason and natural knowledge, and that acquired knowledge is also achieved through natural knowledge; it likewise proves that the more natural knowledge [one possesses] and the more powerful it is, the more acquired knowledge he could gain. And this is the reason why one individual can be more capable and the other incapable [of achieving deep insights]. And these two forms of knowledge appear in the people in gradations of perfection, from the

Prophet to the commoner . . . The teacher of natural knowledge is the perfect omnipotent God, . . . while the teacher of acquired knowledge is the poor deficient and impotent slave, who, even if one conceives that he has perfection in him, is like a drop or less than a drop compared to the sea.

So how can they [the scholars] consider it more wondrous that knowledge is taught by the omnipotent perfect God than [the fact that] knowledge can be acquired from the incapable [human teacher]?! . . . No individual reaches the rank and perfection that the prophets [reach] . . . and especially that of our illiterate [*ummī*] Prophet . . . who has no need to learn from others, except from the almighty and perfect omnipotent [God] . . . . And his perfection, which surpasses all the prophets, frees him from [the need to] learn from the deficient [human teachers], and he has sealed the perfection of the human knowledge so that through this, he became illiterate and had topped the levels of human perfection . . .[22]

Razi argues that the souls of the prophets and saints possess a higher level of intellectual-moral perfection. Thanks to their rare intellects, they discover knowledge and attain perfection intuitively, with little effort and without recourse to teachers or books.[23] The prophets and saints are internally divided according to a nearly infinite hierarchical order of intellectual-moral capacity, which further applies to the category of sacral kings, as we saw in the previous chapter.

Rashid al-Din frequently asserts that the unlettered Prophet's perfect form of the human intellect has freed him of the need to perfect himself physically:[24] "The reason for the superiority of his illiteracy is that he had no need to learn the sciences and reach perfection through the body in this world," while "the rest of the prophets and the rest of humanity need it to attain perfection."[25] Even though other prophets have physically ascended to the heavens (*ʿurūj*), Muhammad's ascension (*miʿrāj*) is superior, for "the Seal of the Prophets had ascended above all human ranks and perfections, and no rank of human perfection remained for him to ascend."[26]

Rashid al-Din indeed uses the theologian Razi's model to establish Öljeitü's supreme position within a hierarchical system of kingship that ontologically parallels Muhammad's position as the Seal of Prophethood in a hierarchy of intellectual-moral perfection.[27] Yet to fully appreciate what is at stake in linking Öljeitü's unlettered genius with Muhammad's natural intellect, we must consider how Rashid al-Din's contemporary, the renowned Damascene scholar Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), applies a similar concept of "natural reason" (*ʿaql fiṭrī*) to a different end, one in support of communal authority. Ibn Taymiyya argues for "the hermeneutic primacy of natural reason [*fiṭra*-guided *ʿaql*]" in constant congruency with divine revelation.[28] He defines *fiṭra* as a divinely instituted inclination toward moral truths and the love of God found in all human beings;[29] he employs this concept to criticize and reject the elitist view of scholars, which limits theological knowledge to the initiated—a view common to both Sufi thinkers and

Ashʿarite theologians such as Razi. In Ibn Taymiyya's thought, then, "natural reason" is universally available to the commoners, which reaffirms his community-centered vision of Islam and serves as the basis for the authority of the community's consensus (*ijmāʿ*) and its infallibility.[30]

In many respects, Rashid al-Din's stance is opposed to that of Ibn Taymiyya: the vizier seeks to further support the Ashʿarites' elitist and exclusive, even "stringent," approach to the knowledge of God and ethics. Furthermore, he fuses this worldview, which justifies social hierarchies and disparities through "divine logic," with the Perso-Islamic political theories that demonstrate the divinely determined absolutist superiority of monarchs over their subjects.[31] His goal is to offer his Mongol patrons a proper vessel for translating and accommodating the Chinggisid vision of privileged, sacral kingship. Rashid al-Din uses the concept of natural knowledge not only to establish the distance between kings (and especially divinely favored rulers such as his Mongol patrons) and the commoners and their unaided and unremarkable intellects, but, more importantly, to establish ontological parallels between sacral kingship and prophethood.

In other respects, however, Rashid al-Din's views have much in common with Ibn Taymiyya's egalitarian, even "democratic," perception of human reason and its natural congruency with the truth of revelation. Ovamir Anjum observes that "the concept of natural constitution (*fiṭra*) attached to reason gives reason legitimacy, indeed a divine nod, but also serves to limit the scope of rational speculation that might challenge revelation. *Fiṭra* is hard-wired, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, to love what is beneficial and to conclude that there is a Creator and that He is good, and hence to love God."[32] For Rashid al-Din, Öljeitü's natural knowledge might grant the Chinggisid ruler's intellect Islamic "legitimacy," even a sacralized aura, but it also reigns in and domesticates the Mongols' divinized kingship by attaching it to core monotheistic conceptions and thus ultimately to the rejection and displacement of the Chinggisids' affinity with Tenggeri.

Rashid al-Din was also motivated by more personal reasons in establishing the preeminence of natural knowledge and illiteracy. He employed these concepts to legitimate his own place as an autodidactic or intuitive theologian. In a treatise titled "Explaining the States of God's Grace" (*Aḥvāl-i fażl Allāh*), Rashid al-Din wrote about his unconventional path to scholardom. The seed planted during his debate with the Buddhist monk at Arghun's court (see this book's introduction), in which God graced him with an elaborate solution to the "ignorant" monk's riddle, gradually grew in the vizier as the years progressed, flourishing into a refined and mature theological reflection, as the vizier rubbed shoulders with the scholars and shaykhs attending the royal court.

Yet despite this feeling that his "tree of knowledge" was steadily taking root, Rashid al-Din remained reluctant to commit to writing, owing to his lack of formal training in the Islamic sciences. It was only after having shared his ideas about

the Prophet's illiteracy with a friend, an eminent Tabrizi Sufi shaykh,[33] and particularly after having been blessed by Muhammad, the first four caliphs, and Hasan and Husayn in a dream in August of 1305, that he finally decided to compose his first treatise on the topic. In the dream the vizier was dissuaded from attempting to contemplate his treatises beforehand, and was instructed instead to practice "associative writing." The Prophet, furthermore, confirmed to him that his thoughts were divinely generated and original.

Indeed, when Rashid al-Din finally composed the treatise, he completed it within half an hour.[34] At the end of this treatise on "Explaining the states of God's grace," a title that directly alluded to the vizier's own name, Fazl Allah (God's grace), Rashid al-Din tied his own divinely gifted natural knowledge to the Prophet's illiteracy: "If an individual does not learn a science, he is illiterate in that science, and there are many sciences that this poor one [Rashid al-Din] has not learnt . . ." However, "through the grace of the Creator," the Prophet Muhammad granted the vizier "a drop from the ocean of his [own] illiteracy."[35]

THE KHAN AS SIMURGH: ON INSPIRATION AND INTELLECTUAL REVELATION

In the *Book of the Sultan,* Öljeitü's intuitive intellectual capacity brings him a step closer to the rank of the prophets. According to Avicenna, prophets possess, together with a strong imaginative revelation and powerful practical faculty, a robust "intuitive capacity." He explains "intellectual revelation" or "intuition" (*ḥads*) as the ability to gain instantaneous knowledge effortlessly.[36] Among the attributes that reaffirm Öljeitü's rank of sacral kingship is a rare acumen that enables him to sidestep the need to apply deduction or rational thought. Discussing some of the secrets that Öljeitü has disclosed to him about "the insight [*firāsa*] and inspiration [*ilhām*] that reach his blessed mind,"[37] the vizier reports that, on one occasion, Öljeitü has secretly confided in him that:

> In the past, I would obtain everything by [applying] deduction [*qiyās*] and empirical knowledge [*tajriba*], and now, there is no doubt that this empirical knowledge grows day by day; by these means, things that remain hidden to everyone else become known to me; but I do not wish to display this, lest some people deny it. Nevertheless, even if a person still denies it, since I would share with him states that have [so far] remained hidden from others, and have recurrently been revealed [to me] in every type [of transmission], there is no doubt that he would rely on it and his problems would be resolved.[38]

Rashid al-Din's account of Öljeitü's "confession" employs Avicennan terminology to demonstrate the ruler's gradual progress from applying his exceptional capacity to reach deductions and attain syllogisms,[39] through gaining new insights,

to the state where he can obtain hidden knowledge effortlessly and intuitively. Öljeitü tells Rashid al-Din that he has a keen perception of his servants at court—so much so, in fact, that he intuitively reads their minds from their facial expressions and appearances before they speak.[40]

Rashid al-Din conveys that he was surprised by Öljeitü's "confession." Never before had he heard of any individual with such powers of perception and intuition. However, since the Ilkhan entrusted him with this secret, he felt compelled to provide an explanation for his unique aptitude. While Öljeitü's "confession" spoke to the vizier's adoption of the Avicennan "epistemological theory of intuition" and thus a philosophical theory of the prophetic intellectual faculty,[41] the vizier's explanation is based on the inspirational (emanationist) mystical Sufi model.[42] In this model, Sufi concepts were used to describe how knowledge was bestowed on the individual's soul through divine intervention.[43] In one key passage, the gradual development of divine revelation or inspiration in the prophets and saints, respectively, was used to explain Öljeitü's similar experience of a gradual progression to "divine inspiration":

> None of the prophets, who receive revelation [*ṣāḥib vaḥy*] and are attributed the prophetic rank, and none of the saints, who receive inspiration [*ṣāḥib ilhām*] and are attributed the saintly rank [*martaba-yi karāmāt*], received revelation and inspiration in full at first, but only gradually, and for most of the prophets, revelation did not reach until they were forty, fifty, sixty and seventy years old. But at the beginning, each of them, either though dreams or in stories and issues that suddenly arrived to them, knew something [hidden], and that capacity which is in them stirs them. Now, the king of Islam [Öljeitü] . . . in spite of his youth, devoted himself seriously and spent much of his time to knowledge and proficiencies and did not spend a single moment of his time without learning . . . and according to what God Almighty had ordered, "we have made you viceregent upon Earth so rule among men with justice and follow not your desire" [Qur'an 38:26].[44] It [kingship] is always laced with administering compassion and justice and the king of Islam is worthy of it, praise the Lord; and he is [also] a saint [*vālī va-ṣāḥib karāmāt*]. The saints have the rank of sainthood [*vilāyat*] alone. This rank [of Öljeitü] surpasses it since it [incorporates] both the ranks of sainthood and sovereignty [*ūlū al-amrī*].[45]

To further illustrate his argument about the gradual advancement of the Ilkhan's unique intellect, Öljeitü is compared to a Simurgh, the mythical Iranian bird. In the *Shahnama*, the benevolent enormous Simurgh saves, protects, and teaches the albino prince Zal, who describes its wings as his fortune and grace.[46] Öljeitü is comparable to the featherless Simurgh: despite not having yet grown his feathers, "the power of flight is in his nature . . . and his heart is filled with the joy of flight and flying; each time, this mirth [fills his heart], his wings flutter." The featherless Simurgh's "wing batting" is like the rare, remarkable insights that have been intermittently "emanating" from the Ilkhan's mind. However, now that his feathers have

begun to grow, he is finally able to take flight; and "these are the new insights that appear day after day from him." The moment the bird's feathers are fully grown represents the full progression of the power of Öljeitü's internal light, which the vizier argues will be completed when he nears the age of forty.[47] Just as flying and growing feathers have been part of the bird's nature since its creation, the Mongol king is also naturally predisposed to this intellectual intuition and divine inspiration. Directly addressing Öljeitü, Rashid al-Din writes that his "luminous, intellectual feathers will grow effortlessly . . . and through these feathers, you will be able to fly in a single moment such great distances, and your intellect will reach such deep insights in the blink of an eye" that no bird could ever reach.[48] During his conception, Öljeitü has been assigned the light of divine guidance, manifested in his instantaneous, intuitive insight. Soaring to new heights, the Chinggisid Simurgh watches the higher and lower worlds from above, "hunting for new spiritual game." Other individuals, however, are like a wingless horse: no matter how fast they ride, they will never be able to catch up with Öljeitü.[49]

The gradual progression of Öljeitü's keen perception places him in proximity with the ranks of the prophets and saints. In discussing the differences between divine revelation and inspiration, Rashid al-Din teaches us that the divine source of the two is the same, but that there is a steep hierarchical order in forms of inspiration: the lowest level is made up of animal senses and intuition; next we have knowledge that intentionally or unintentionally appears in the minds of middle-ranked individuals; and "above this, there is what the saints have, some of whom see it in a dream and some while awake." Still, this inspiration is inferior to the prophets' full revelation, which constitutes the knowledge of unknown remarkable things.[50] Rashid al-Din describes the position of the sacral kings in the ranks of these elite souls as follows:

> There is no doubt that the souls of God's intimates and his chosen, from among the prophets, saints, and the knowledgeable and just kings, are cognizant of secrets and truths, and through inspiration and unveiling, hidden things are generated in their souls; in particular, the king of Islam [Öljeitü], whose blessed interior is adorned with the light of belief . . . who has the capacity to achieve all the perfections, is divinely assisted, and to whom God has blessed with the most powerful constellation [ṭāliʿ] and the highest levels of fortune . . . And it is verified that divine effluence through inspiration reaches his honorable soul.[51]

Situating Öljeitü among the ranks of those possessing divine inspiration is far from a minor issue in the *Book of the Sultan*. In fact, the issue of hierarchical order of forms of communicating with the divine is the initial impetus for its composition. Öljeitü's question that confounded the scholars was concerned with the hierarchical relationship between mediated and unmediated revelation. Or, in the words of the Mongol king, "What makes revelation without or with [angelic]

mediation nobler?" From a Mongol vantage point, this question had great significance. The Mongols argued that the successors of Chinggis Khan enjoyed a unique affinity with Tenggeri, a quality inherited from the imperial founder. After his execution of the Shaman Teb Tenggeri, who had earlier announced Heaven's choice of Chinggis Khan, the founder began communicating directly with Tenggeri, securing divine favor for himself. He thus became "priest and emperor, monopolizing both religion and empire."[52] The ruler's performance in the court debates and, more broadly, his special capacity, which enabled him to intuitively derive brilliant new insights without any expertise or background, were manifestations of this special affinity with Heaven, in keeping with immanentist traditions that enabled kings to bypass the religious clergy and establish a direct affinity with the divine sphere.[53]

For the Mongols, therefore, unmediated revelation had to be superior to communication with Heaven through intermediaries such as angels. In his discussion of the ranks of prophethood, Rashid al-Din indeed confirms and accommodates his patrons' views. He reaffirms Öljeitü's premise that unmediated communication with God—enabled, for example, through the Prophet's ascension—is superior to communication through angels. However, he also argues that such direct communication is rare, employed only on the few occasions when a special need arises, for it requires far greater resources. Angels serve as intermediaries in the case of the more common communications that require swifter, immediate exchanges of messages between God and the Prophet.[54] This does not mean, the vizier emphasizes, that the rank of the angels as messengers is higher than that of the prophets; on the contrary, the angels have a limited role and are tasked only with the delivery of divine instructions.

Just as Razi had done before him, Rashid al-Din uses light to represent the emanation of inspirational knowledge and divine guidance.[55] The Ilkhan received new insights "through divine effluence and inspiration," since God had imparted light and inspiration on his essence.[56] The Ilkhan is assigned the task of delivering and disseminating his gifts among his Muslim subjects. In one of his later treatises, from 1311, Rashid al-Din answers the ruler's question about the differences between prophets and kings by discussing the unique status of kings who are just, perfect, Sahib Qiran rulers. The hearts of the Sahib Qiran kings are divine treasures,[57] and sovereigns are divinely inspired (*aṣḥāb al-duwal mulhamūn*).[58] Likening Öljeitü's inspirational knowledge to light, the vizier writes that "God had adorned his blessed interior with sacred lights and assorted wisdoms so that such subtleties of truths and secrets of varied wisdom reach the beings."[59]

Rashid al-Din presents Öljeitü's remarkably intuitive questions and comments as a vessel for disseminating this divine grace to believers.[60] Through his guiding questions in court audiences or intellectual exchanges, the Ilkhan's perfection radiates toward those in his service, so that they too "reach many great perfections." For Rashid al-Din, the clearest evidence for this is his own example, for he

has never before penned any theological work; yet the king's "internal ray of light" has filled his heart, enabling him to compose his theological compendia.[61] Comparing ignorance to death, Rashid al-Din likens Öljeitü to the prophet ʿIsa (Jesus), who has miraculously revived the dead, arguing that the Mongol *masīḥ*-like king of Islam "has revived and will revive thousands upon thousands of dead, and this is a great miracle."[62]

The Ilkhan's remarkable ability to perfect the souls of the others, who are deficient in this regard, is further linked to the prophetic qualities. Following Razi's hierarchical model of prophetic perfection, Rashid al-Din also argues that while the souls of both prophets and saints are perfect, prophets alone are required and able to perfect the deficient souls of the masses.[63] Muhammad is the ultimate perfecter in this theory of "perfectionist abrogation": as the Seal of the Prophets, he was sent to perfect all previous and now abrogated religions. Whereas previous religions were deficient and imperfect and thus had a constant need for reformers and perfecters (*mutammim, mukammil*), Muhammad was sent to accomplish the "perfection" of these religions through God's final revelation, for his mission was universal, in contrast to previous, particular, and exclusive revelations.[64] Muhammad was therefore the "father of all the people," since his mission was to provide guidance in this world and intercede in the next for his "offspring"—that is, for all humanity.[65]

"THE WORDS OF KINGS": DOMESTICATION AND THE IMMANENTIST "PUSHBACK"

Rashid al-Din's writings are informed by the broader intellectual currents prevalent in the Ilkhanid-ruled Muslim lands. His work is especially influenced by the increased reconciliation between theology and Greek-derived philosophy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[66] For the vizier, Öljeitü embodies divinely inspired knowledge and overall "theological insight," the fourteenth-century synthesis of philosophy and theology. As we saw in the introduction, one of the divine-like attributes of Chinggis Khan, which his successors sought to imitate, was his intelligence—his premonition or intuitive knowledge—attained through personal communion with Heaven, and publicly displayed in the debates at court. This performance of royal intellect communicated and justified the ruler's place as a rightful heir to the imperial founder. Through the association of the khan's intellect and intuitive knowledge with Muhammad, the Chinggisid notion of the khan's intuitive wisdom was both accommodated and transposed into the Islamic moral framework.

The vizier's theological approach to domesticating the Chinggisids' divinized kingship, however, is best encapsulated by the phrase, "The words/theology of kings are the kings of words/theology" (*kalām al-mulūk mulūk al-kalām*), which

he often repeats. He argues that the proverb reaffirms the superiority both of Öljeitü's speech and commentary over those of other kings and the saints[67] and of his unique rank of sacral kingship. On the other hand, he also uses the proverb to support the inspirational model. The proverb, however, has another aspect: it transposes Öljeitü's sacral kingship into the heart of theology. Theology envelopes Öljeitü's kingship (*mulūk*) literally.

In refashioning the Chinggisid Ilkhan as the king of kalam, Rashid al-Din not only integrates his immanentist patron into Islam; he also seeks to inculcate in Öljeitü an altogether different religious, transcendentalist outlook based on the exclusivity of religious affiliation and not on interreligious transparency and translatability; and informed by abstract views of a transcendent divinity not on an empirical religious mode.[68] The Mongol khans possessed an empirical insight based on an intuitive sensory perceptiveness. They were disposed to the useful and the tangible, as well as to mythologizing. This was far from the Greek-derived scientific and philosophical reasoning that permeated the Muslim vizier's theological thought.[69] The latter was about differentiating truth from falsehood. It was distant, ineffable, and abstract, rather than sensory, immersive, and applicable. Öljeitü's status as a Chinggis Khan-like untutored prodigy was supported and reaffirmed by the vizier's works and records of court interactions. Yet Öljeitü's intuitive capacity, originating now in divine inspiration or in the Ilkhan's uniquely rational intuition, no longer led him to the here and now but to the universal and the transcendent.

The parallels between his Mongol patron and the Prophet that the vizier established in his theological treatises have an additional purpose. Alan Strathern observes that when kings are converted from immanentist to transcendentalist traditions, they are often not aware of the price they will pay in terms of "a diminution of their divinized status." During the moment of a ruler's conversion, "transcendentalist traditions were stretched through processes of translation, misunderstanding, substitution and de fact syncretism"—indeed, so much so that the new religion's perception of the kings' position may not have been apparent at first.[70]

It was precisely this vagueness in the translation and mediation of Islam to the Mongol rulers that at this point, about a decade after the Ilkhanid court had officially embraced Islam, the vizier wished to clarify. This was what was at stake in Rashid al-Din's discussion of Öljeitü's questions about the differences between kings and prophets. He explained that the perfect Sahib Qiran kings are divinely rewarded the title "Shadow of God on Earth" (*ẓill Allāh*), based on the tradition attributed to the Prophet that "the sultan is the Shadow of God on Earth; whoever is persecuted finds refuge in it." This title, he argues, is not shared with prophets but is attributed exclusively to kings. The "Shadow of God on Earth" represents the intimate bond between certain rulers and God, and it registers the parallels between these rulers' temporal reign and God's government.[71]

The title is a parable referring to those individuals whose attributes bear the greatest resemblance to God's—not, Rashid al-Din stresses, in an anthropomorphic sense (*tashbīh*) but *essentially*: "in contrast to others who are allocated [only] some of the similar attributes [of God], kings have been allocated all the similar attributes of God." Therefore, the perfect kings are God's shadow, for while one can tell certain things about an individual's body from the general contour of his shadow, one cannot see the specific details inside the shadow's outlines. Similarly, the king is the shadow for the comprehensiveness of his representation of the (semantic) semblances of God's attributes, without a real ontological identity between the ruler and God.[72]

The theory of the ruler as the "Shadow of God" was initially a channel for the integration of Sasanian notions of royal patrimonialism into the Islamic framework. It subsequently served to demarcate the separate sphere for the divine legitimation of temporal power. This later stage was part of the bifurcation of power into a form of religious authority represented by the caliphate and a form of political authority represented by the sultanate. The "Shadow of God" came to stand, therefore, for earthly justice, delineating an independent model of righteous kingship, not necessarily bound by the sharia and its gatekeepers, the religious scholars. Yet, from the twelfth century onward, and especially after the fall of the caliphate and the advent of Mongol rule, the "Shadow of God" witnessed another transformation as it became further assimilated into a new model of "Islamic royalism" that fused the two spheres, religion and politics, into one framework.[73]

This new model of righteous kingship was epitomized in the proliferation of the designation "God's vicegerent" alongside "Shadow of God." Together, the two titles imposed a "moral imperative over the sultanate," remolding kingship to correlate with God's ethical dominion.[74] Rashid al-Din also linked the two titles, arguing that they were an exclusive designation of the perfect sultans, as reaffirmed by the Qur'anic verse: "O David, we have made you vicegerent upon earth so rule among men with justice" (38: 26).[75] The designation "vicegerency" (*khilāfa*) reinforced the same ethical simulacrum of God's dominion as the "Shadow of God."[76] And yet, while both titles communicated the unique bond between sultan and God—indeed, later authors often remarked on their overlapping meanings—the title of "Shadow of God" also had some advantages over "God's vicegerent," making the former the most commonly used sultanic designation in the post-ʿAbbasid era. First, there were no restrictions imposed on applying it, in contrast to the juristic reluctance to apply "God's vicegerent" to the sultans; it was, therefore, a title specifically designed for rulers.[77]

Another explanation for its popularity lay in the way it related and appealed to the immanentist registers of Mongol and post-Mongol sultans. Rashid al-Din, indeed, was aware of the "deifying appeal" of this analogy between God and the earthly king. He addressed directly his concern that the title of "Shadow of God"

might lead his patrons to anthropomorphism, identifying God with his creation. Cleverly playing here on the deified registers of the "Shadow of God," Rashid al-Din utilized his discussion of the title's meaning and the king's attributes (above) to deliver an accessible lesson on the noncorporeal nature of God's attributes. In Islamic thought, anthropomorphism was a major concern in that it signified the deterioration of the faith and a regression from monotheism to idolatry.[78]

That the vizier felt the need for such a lesson on anthropomorphism for his Muslim Mongol patron is observed in his third refutation of reincarnation, where he discusses one of the Ilkhan's questions. Öljeitü's question betrays not only his somewhat literal interpretation of this phrase but also the difficulty in conceiving or imagining a transcendental afterlife outside the Mongols' immanentist framework. The question revolves around the comparison of the sultan's rule and God's governance that is encapsulated by the phrase "Shadow of God":

> One of the attributes of God is kingship, since he is the king of all kings and according to the saying, "The Sultan is God's Shadow on Earth," the absolute kings are in the shadow and semblance of his royal attributes . . . ; but a king cannot be a king without commanding right and forbidding wrong, and sentencing people to death or life. How can God, then, be a king in the afterlife, if individual souls are sentenced eternally to heaven or hell and he cannot punish or reward them?[79]

Öljeitü's question may be read as an immanentist "pushback" to transcendentalism. It testifies to the ongoing hold of empirical religious sensibilities for the Mongol elite. Inverting this commensurability between earthly rule and divine government, Öljeitü's question applies a rather mundane and functionality-centered approach to the phrase. It uses the institution of kingship to deduce something about the functions and rights of God's rule. Thus, the Ilkhan formulates an intriguing conundrum, in which the Mongols' immanentist worldview is applied to the heavenly transcendentalist setting of the afterlife. Instead of casting a moralizing "shadow" on the Mongol sultan's earthly rule as the title is supposed to do, Öljeitü's question uses the affinity epitomized by the phrase to reduce the distance between God's rule and its earthly semblance. The Mongol sultan lowers the heavenly government to its "worldly" example instead of lifting kingship from its "immanentist" domain toward its righteous model. This question, in other words, suggests that the exchanges between the Ilkhan and his vizier were not unilateral, with the Mongol ruler also employing a measure of empiricist reinterpretation of Islamic discourses.

In his treatises, Rashid al-Din translates and incorporates the Chinggisid claim to a superior, intuitive, and empirical intellect into Islamic registers, but he also constantly and unequivocally conveys the price his patrons must pay for this Islamic "concession" to their immanentist leanings. Öljeitü is the recipient of divine inspiration, not revelation, and performs "saintly" rather than "prophetic"

miracles, even if, as the vizier asserts, he possesses the ranks of both rulership *and* sainthood, elevating his status above the saints.[80] And while his questions might perfect his court servants and retinue, or more broadly, the Ilkhanid scholarly community, he is not the "perfecter of religions" or the prophetic father figure guiding all humanity. The parallels between prophets and sacral kings like Öljeitü ultimately also mark the impassible boundary between them and establish a clear hierarchy in which kings are inferior to prophets.

MUJADDID RULERSHIP

To further convince his Chinggisid patrons to pay this hefty price and give up their divinized credentials, in exchange for their "demotion" to the position of Islamic sacral kings, Rashid al-Din creates for Öljeitü another position, a new category of prophesized reformer kingship. In the introduction to *Book of the Sultan,* the vizier had referenced a tradition attributing to the Prophet the saying that "God will send to this community at the turn of every century a person who will renew its religion."[81] Emerging from Shafiʿi scholarly circles, the centennial renewer (Mujaddid) tradition was not a central concept in medieval Islamic religious thought. It mainly functioned as an honorific title bestowed on religious scholars in no systematic way.[82] From the fifteenth century onward, however, the tradition's significance in religious and intellectual circles grew, and the title of Mujaddid found new eschatological connotations. It also gained keen audiences in imperial circles and became a common designation for Muslim sultans.[83]

Rashid al-Din was the first to use the tradition to describe a Muslim ruler. In the *Book of the Sultan,* the first proof of Öljeitü's rank of sacral kingship was a slightly altered version of the tradition: replacing "renewal" with "strengthening," Rashid al-Din described Öljeitü as a centennial "strengthener of religion."[84] The Mujaddid tradition was likely well known in Ilkhanid intellectual circles. One Ilkhanid author designated Rashid al-Din as the centennial renewer of the eighth Hijri century.[85] The vizier's choice to change the tradition, from a "renewer" to a "strengthener," however, might have been less a result of his "own claim" to the title and more of his wish to repurpose a tradition that was still primarily familiar as an honorific scholarly title for royal uses.[86] This seems to have changed later in the fourteenth century, as familiarity with the tradition rapidly grew throughout court circles.[87]

The Ilkhanid vizier also provided a rationale for identifying Öljeitü as the Mujaddid. Jalal al-Din Qayini (d. 1434–35) argued that his patron, the Timurid ruler Shahrukh, was the Mujaddid, since his righteous reign began in the year 1408–9 (811 AH)—eight Hijri centuries after the Prophet's death.[88] Rashid al-Din also understood the tradition in terms of a measure of cyclical salvific time. The vizier argued that Öljeitü's rule fit the tradition, since his auspicious reign was

preceded by a century in which "not a single strengthener of the religion of Islam" appeared, and the Islamic world had succumbed to moral decay and idol worship. The "light-emitting" Öljeitü effaced "the traces of these unbelievers," and his enthronement was greeted by a surge in Muslim conversions.[89] Öljeitü's fortunate reign was thus aligned with the Islamic "rhythm of salvation,"[90] by embedding Chinggisid rule in an Islamic discourse of religious renewal and reform (*tajdīd*).[91] The description of Öljeitü as a reformer-converter king was interestingly reflected in several Ilkhanid accounts that addressed the worsening of the conditions of Christian communities under Ilkhanid rule at the beginning of his reign. According to one report, when Öljeitü ascended the throne, he reinstated the poll tax (*jizya*) on dhimmis—Jews and Christians—and reimposed the distinguishing dress code (*ghiyār*).[92]

The astrologically ascribed Sahib Qiran[93] and the prophetically preordained Mujaddid (or rather, "strengthener of religion") espoused a similar cyclical understanding of history, enabling the convergence of cosmic patterns and salvific time within the figure of a chosen ruler. They also shared the same vision of political authority as assigned by direct divine intervention (or cosmic determinism) in human history, bypassing the "usual," restrictive channels of the Islamic world—hereditary succession to the Prophet (the caliph or the Shiʿi imam), and the juridical Sunni reasoning and authority of the religious scholars (ʿulamāʾ).[94]

The vizier's use of an altered Mujaddid tradition was also compatible with the understanding of Chinggisid rule as predestined. As stated in the Mongol *Secret History* and repeated in the Mongol ultimatums to European leaders, Chinggis Khan's rise and rule were predicted by a prophecy delivered from Heaven to Shaman Teb Tenggeri.[95] Rashid al-Din's identification of Öljeitü as a preordained reviver king established Ilkhanid rule on the basis of a Muslim prophetic tradition instead of a Mongol prophecy. The Mongols were assimilated to the Islamic salvific schema by reinterpreting and reinforcing their own claims to predestined and divinely supported government. In other words, Muhammad assumed Teb Tenggeri's role.[96]

CONCLUSION

The Islamization of Ilkhanid kingship also invited a visual transformation in the pictorial representations of Muhammad. Whereas, in the earliest extant images, the Prophet is depicted as a divinely enthroned prophet-monarch surrounded by regal and sacral elements, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Muhammad becomes a superhuman hero. This new trajectory begins with the pictorial cycles of the Prophet's birth, life, and career—his battles and miracles—intertwined in the manuscripts of the *Compendium*. This "graphic novel"-like approach depicts him as a divinely guided hero on the path to securing Islam's victory. Christiane

Gruber suggests that this image of the Prophet as a mythical hero fits the Ching-gisid possession of heavenly support and unique good fortune, manifested in the Chinggisids' military success. Iconographical devices such as angels, markers of heaven's support, did more than validate the Mongols' triumph. They refashioned the Prophet as a divinely appointed military and political leader, a more appealing figure from a Mongol perspective.[97] The Prophet undergoes a process of "heroic divinization" as a sacralized prophet-ruler defined by heroic deeds, exhibiting supernatural power and charismatic aura.[98]

Rashid al-Din's theology, however, takes the opposite approach: instead of bringing the figure of Muhammad "closer" to Chinggis Khan through its heroiza-tion, Rashid al-Din brings his Mongol patron closer to the example of the tran-scendental-ethical Prophet. As the image of Öljeitü becomes imbued with a right-eous mode of kingship, the Chinggisids' ontological (divinized, cosmic) relationship to the divine is converted into ethical proximity. Avicennan theology, combined with the Sufi-inspirational scheme, enables the Ilkhanid vizier to recon-cile the two seemingly incompatible modes of immanentist impulses and their monotheistic domestication. Razi's theory of prophethood serves as a perfect tool. As Michael Noble explains, he seeks to "rescue" prophethood "from the relativis-ing effect of the Avicennan naturalistic account of prophethood,"[99] but also to pro-vide "the chance for the personal soteriology for a spiritual, intellectual elite."[100] Rashid al-Din similarly "rescues" prophethood from a similar demotion owing to the self-deification drive of his immanentist patrons, while also providing room for these self-sacralizing ambitions.

By offering Öljeitü a new mode of righteous, miracle-working Muhammad-like kingship, ranked above the saints but below the prophets, and topping this up with a newly minted position of the prophesized reformer kingship, Rashid al-Din fashions an appealing package that would both appease and constrain his patron's divinized impulses. In the vizier's new schema, the Mongol Ilkhan is not only tasked with sustaining the conditions for the Muslim community to strive for sal-vation; he is also charged with actively guiding the *umma* to redemption, based on his own divine intuitive insights and transcendentalist rational impulses. In this way, therefore, Rashid al-Din crowns Öljeitü the king of kalam.

From Ancestor Worship to Shrine-Centered Kingship

*Ilkhanid Confessional Politics and the Debate
over Shrine Visitation*

In the previous two chapters, we explored the methods Rashid al-Din used to ethicize his Chinggisid patrons' model of divinized kingship and refashion the Ilkhanid sultans to accord with a new model of Islamic monarchy. Chapter 3 focused on the exceptional auspiciousness of the Chinggisids, and it explored parallels and links between Rashid al-Din's experimentation with the new model of Islamic sacral kingship and Buddhist methods of domesticating divinized kingship. Chapter 4 addressed the ruler's divine, intuitive wisdom and intellect in emulation of Chinggis Khan's example and proximity with Heaven and the transformation of the unlettered Öljeitü into a righteous Muslim king whose intellect is naturally aligned with theological reasoning.

This chapter examines the transformation of another principle of Chinggisid ideology: ancestral veneration. It explores Rashid al-Din's attitude to this practice as it evolved in his debates with Buddhist monks, Shiʿi scholars, and Mongol rulers. As in the case of the Chinggisid claim to exceptional wisdom and good fortune, the vizier strives to translate and resituate his patrons' ancestor worship in relation to Islam's salvific imperative, mobilizing "transcendentalism" first to disenchant and then to resacralize his patrons' royal authority. Rashid al-Din's utilization of the discourses of shrine visitation parallels the renovations in the Ilkhan Öljeitü's monumental tomb in the city of Sultaniyya. Both exhibit the same pattern: expanding sacral hierarchies and structures to accommodate Chinggisid claims to sacral kingship, where ancestor veneration plays a prominent role, while substituting the Mongols' divinized mode of sovereignty with a righteous register.

This chapter also considers Rashid al-Din's rationalization of shrine veneration in connection with his attempts to navigate the shifting sectarian landscape of the

Ilkhanid court, leading to and following Öljeitü's conversion to Shiʿism in 1309. I show that Shiʿi notions of descent-based succession, as well as decorative motifs of shrines, especially those housing ʿAlid remains, were selectively appropriated and reconfigured as building blocks for constructing the discursive and material scaffolding of a new Islamic royal cult centered on Öljeitü and his Chinggisid dynasty. The vizier's discussion of shrine visitation therefore bespeaks a broader shift toward what Azfar Moin identifies as the rise of shrine-centered sovereignty in Islamic Iran and Central Asia and a new discourse of Islamic kingship anchored in sainthood and imperial shrine cultures.[1]

CHANGING BURIAL PRACTICES: FROM DIVINIZED ABSENCE TO MONUMENTAL SHRINES

The Chinggisid successors legitimized their rule by maintaining a ritualized connection with Chinggis Khan. Correct reverence for the imperial founder conferred the right to imperial domination.[2] As part of the Mongols' immanentist-divinized model of kingship, this ritualized commemoration guaranteed the continuous flow of Heaven's blessing to the Chinggisid line. From the theoretical perspective, the dynastic veneration of the imperial founder reflected the Chinggisids' transition from the heroic mode of kingship to the "more passive cosmic mode in which the king was not himself a being stretching for divinity but an interlocutor with Heaven, a stationary ritual pivot."[3] In the cosmic mode, this veneration also served to unite the community, as it connected the "ritual expressions of communal sanctity" with the participation in rites that evoked the universal sanctity of the Chinggisid line.[4]

Chinggis Khan's successors, especially China's Yuan and post-Yuan Mongol rulers, cultivated their ritualized connection with the imperial founder by expanding the devotional cult. During the 1260s, Qubilai established an eight-chambered complex where the remains of Chinggis Khan and his offspring were housed, and rituals were performed four times annually, probably in a seasonal routine.[5] The Mongols were keen on appropriating not only the technological, intellectual, and material resources of their subjects but also their spiritual and ritual assets. In turn, their subjects offered their own and even others' ritual resources to advance their own agendas and gain royal patronage. Confucian and Buddhist rituals and traditions were appropriated to buttress the Chinggisid cult and the dynasty's funerary tablets and portraits were placed in Confucian ancestor temples in the capital, in the Hanlin academy, and in ancestral halls in Beijing's main Tibetan Buddhist monastic centers.[6]

The Ilkhans also practiced the Chinggisid ancestor cult. Öljeitü's itinerary, for example, included repeated visits to his brother's tomb in Sham-i Ghazan, west of Tabriz, where "memorial feasts" of milk, alcohol, and sacrificial meat were possibly

offered to Ghazan's remains or to his effigy.[7] Yet, Mongol burial customs also changed considerably in the Ilkhanate with the transition from unmarked gravesites to monumental tomb structures. The practice of burying the Chinggisid khans in undisclosed and forbidden gravesites, known as *qoruq,* stood in contrast to Muslim practices of burying the royal dead under monumental domed structures.[8] Peter Jackson suggests that this difference, alongside other cultural-religious distinctions, might have initially hindered the Mongols' conversion to Islam.[9]

After Ghazan's conversion, however, the Ilkhans transitioned almost immediately to the construction of monumental tomb structures. The practice of burying the Mongol elite in monumental structures seems to have been likewise adopted by Mongols who were not converts, further suggesting that the gap between the two practices might not have been so great.[10] Both burial practices, in fact, ultimately had the similar function of sanctifying the ruler's grave, though they also carried different implications: the overstated *absence* of the *qoruq,* through its inaccessibility, secrecy, or "unknowability," bolstered the supernatural, divinized power of the buried remains of the Chinggisid king; whereas the monumental, visually rich *presence* of the Muslim shrine evoked the Ilkhanid ruler's righteousness, and moreover, his favorable—abstract and transcendental—fate in the afterlife.[11]

Accordingly, rather than viewing the transition from the unmarked grave to the monumental tomb as Islam's violent "intrusion" or "disruption" of the Chinggisid imperial cult, we should conceive of it as the adoption of the Islamic vocabulary of shrine veneration to achieve the same outcome. Devin DeWeese refers to this process as assimilative displacement, whereby the intruding religion ultimately fills the vacuum created by the uprooted and disrupted aspects of the previous cult, replacing them with a fitting element. Here this was done by imbuing the Chinggisid ancestor veneration with Islamic sacrality through the presence of such elements as Muslim saints and shrine aesthetics (below).[12] Similarly, the account of Arghun's daughter, Öljei Khatun, establishing a Sufi lodge to mark her father's hidden gravesite, should be understood both in terms of an Islamic intrusion into the Mongol sacred space of ancestral veneration and in terms of assimilation,[13] and thus as a reinforcement of the burial site's sacredness through Muslim media and vocabularies.[14] From the perspective of the Mongols' nonexclusive religiosity (see this book's introduction), these demonstrations may be seen less as intrusions and more as additions meant to augment sacred Chinggisid power, though they were probably also met with resistance among the Mongol elite.

The Buddhist monks applied an assimilative approach, merging their Ilkhanid patrons' ancestor veneration with Buddhist worship, as was done in post-Yuan Mongolia.[15] In a *Compendium* section on Ghazan's destruction of the Buddhist shrines and the forced conversion (or expulsion) of the Buddhist practitioners (*bakhshīs*) from the Ilkhanate, Rashid al-Din writes about a conversation between

Ghazan and the amirs and Khatuns, the ladies, concerning his decision to destroy the shrine (*butkhāna*)—likely a Buddhist temple—his father Arghun has constructed and "endowed" to the Buddhists. Ghazan refers to his father an idol worshipper, probably in reference to his Buddhist convictions.[16] In this exchange, the Mongol commanders and ladies rebuke Ghazan for his treatment of the site, not because of his attitude toward the Buddhists but because of the state of the painted portrait or image (*ṣūra*) of Arghun on the temple's walls.[17] As this portrait has been exposed to the natural elements in the ruined site, they propose to restore it, either by reestablishing the shrine or by building a palace instead, to appease Arghun's spirit and redeem his name. Ghazan declines, since any building on the site would end up being used for idolatry, and suggests building a palace in his father's memory elsewhere—without a portrait.[18] The amirs in this account appear less concerned with the desecration of Buddhist shrines and more concerned with the disrespect shown to the spirits of the Ilkhanid ancestors. Arghun's portrait was considered a consecrated, inhabited, or animated image, and thus a meaningful channel for appeasing the spirits of the royal ancestors.[19]

We should note that according to this account, Ghazan's opposition to rebuilding the site was more due to the notion that it might contribute to the revival of Buddhist idolatry than to some principled opposition to ancestor veneration. The question is not whether ancestors should be venerated or whether they can aid (or harm); nor is it whether their burial sites should be consecrated. Rather, the question is *which* rites—Buddhist or Muslim—are the most effective in reinforcing the Chinggisids' ancestor worship and sacral kingship. The same dynamic is found in Rashid al-Din's discussion of the Ilkhanid royal collection of Buddhist relics (below): he is more interested in promoting Muslim saintly power over the Buddhist remains than in uprooting the empirical logic behind the Mongol attraction to immanent relics and saintly power holders.

"OUR SAINTS DO NOT BURN": DISPUTING BUDDHIST RELICS

Associated with spiritual blessing and immanent power, relics were among the prized artifacts that moved across Eurasia under Mongol domination. Blessed images, attire worn by sages, amulets, and ritual tools were sent by monks and clergy to the khans to garner their support and patronage;[20] they were also bestowed on members of the Mongol elite during ritualistic moments of transformation and celebration. Mongol rulers avidly collected these objects. In one of the better-known examples from the Ilkhanate, Ghazan was given a talisman by his convertor Shaykh Sadr al-Din Hammuya after showing special interest in the item during his conversion ceremony, which the shaykh directed.[21] These sacred items were not only blessings; they could also be considered harmful and they required

the attention of ritual experts—shamans (*qāmān*) and Buddhists—to defuse their potential danger.[22]

The Ilkhan Arghun, who was an avid supporter of Buddhism, not only summoned Buddhist monks from across Eurasia to his court; he also amassed Buddhist relics from various provinces. In fact, his interest in Buddhist blessed objects appears to have been common knowledge among the Mongol elite—so much so that the 1288 delegation from the Golden Horde commander Nogai (d. 1299) gave Arghun a precious Buddhist relic, which greatly pleased the Ilkhan.[23]

Arghun's son Öljeitü was also familiar with his father's relic collection. Discussing the Buddhists' cremation of their dead in his second refutation of reincarnation, "The Precious Thoughts," Rashid al-Din reported a conversation he had with Öljeitü concerning the Ilkhan's curiosity about his father's obsession. Öljeitü explained that during his youth, he followed his father's example and spent several days living in accordance with the ways of the Buddhist monks. He learned about the small, pearl-like relics found after the cremation of Buddhist sages. The Buddhists believed that their size and weight—some even smaller than a pea—were determined by the level of perfection of the cremated sages. Sizeable relics—Śarīra (*shārīn*)—were rare and priceless.[24]

Rashid al-Din was already familiar with the Śarīra, suggesting that the sacred objects of their religious competitors drew the attention of the Muslims at the court. In the *Compendium,* he wrote that they are made of the bead-shaped "translucent bone in front of the heart";[25] and that the Buddhist monks of Sarandib refer to the Buddha's (or rather, Adam's) teeth in their possession as Śarīra.[26] He further noted that the Buddhists believe that individuals who possess the relics will reap special benefits, and that, if they remain chaste and cherish the sacred remains, their blessed influence would increase.[27]

Returning to the vizier's exchange with Öljeitü, the king told Rashid al-Din that he retained in his possession a couple of his father's relics. Despite doubting the Buddhists' claims about them, Öljeitü tested the remains himself and confirmed that they were indeed indestructible: fire, metal, or diamonds did not harm them. Öljeitü then inquired why the Muslim dead did not produce similarly remarkable remains.[28]

This anecdote is important. First, it demonstrates the importance of Öljeitü's earlier Buddhist education at his father's court. Second, it indicates that the Mongol rulers themselves facilitated the expansion of Muslim knowledge of Buddhist beliefs and practices. Third and most importantly, this exchange speaks to the appeal of the Buddhist karma-magnifying sacral objects. Part of the appeal of saintly relics is that they address both transcendentalist and empirical sensibilities: they commemorate and concretize the moral authority of the sacred dead but also convey a palpable mode of sacrality, leading to their understanding as powerful objects.[29]

In his answer to Öljeitü's inquiry, Rashid al-Din accordingly treads the thin line between addressing the transcendentalist ramifications of Buddhist cremation and offering a rational rebuke of their relics, on the one hand, and satisfying the empirical logic driving Öljeitü's fascination with them, on the other.[30] He offers a rational explanation, suggesting that the relics are created by friction and heat. But he also argues for an alternative interpretation: instead of being Buddhist sages' blessed remains, the Śarīra are a divine warning to the infidels that their bodies will be resurrected and hence should not be mutilated, and certainly not cremated.[31]

Rashid al-Din's most compelling arguments, however, are those comparing Buddhist and Muslim supernatural forces. First, he argues that if the Muslims cremate their dead as well, something better and greater than the Buddhist relics will be found in their ashes. Second, whereas the Buddhist saints leave behind them pea-size relics, "the bodies of our perfect ones have arrived at such a level [of perfection] that nothing harms [the integrity of] their bodies, [and they lose] not even a hair from their head or their body." Sufi shaykhs can walk on and consume fire without harm and the prophet Ibrahim was not harmed when flung into a fire fiercer than the fires of hell.[32]

Rashid al-Din takes advantage here of the Mongol interest in harnessing (or defusing) the potent spiritual forces of their subjects.[33] He transitions from an intellectual, rational disputation over the feasibility of such indestructible relics to a "demonstration" of the superior cultic efficacy of Muslim saintly power. This competition between Muslim and Buddhist saints—alive or in the form of posthumous relics—follows the pattern of immanentist tests to which the Mongol overlords had often subjected wielders of spiritual power. A notable example was the antinomian Turkman shaykh Baraq Baba (d. 1307–8), who was welcomed at the Ilkhanid court after having established his supernatural status by taming a wild tiger in a test ordered by the sultan.[34]

Öljeitü developed a "reputation" for unleashing wild beasts on holy men for that purpose. According to the famous traveler, Ibn Battuta, Öljeitü reverted to Sunnism following his conversion to Shiʿism (see below) after witnessing the chief justice of Shiraz, Majd al-Din Ismaʿil (1272/3–1335) tame a pack of man-eating dogs. The king ordered the beasts be unleashed on the wretched qadi as punishment for his refusal to obey his orders to propagate the Shiʿi faith in Shiraz. After witnessing the miracle, he bestowed on Majd al-Din lavish gifts, and allegedly abandoned his Shiʿi convictions.[35]

That the vizier fashioned his disputation of the Buddhist relics in the format of a test by fire was particularly significant. The fire ordeal was a recurring motif in Mongol Islamization narratives.[36] These included legendary Ilkhanid-era accounts (mainly from Syria) that claimed that Hülegü had converted to Islam after witnessing a Sufi shaykh enter a fire with his son and reemerge unscathed after several hours, bearing undeniable proof of visiting a beautiful garden.[37] According to one

account, Hülegü himself orchestrated the ordeal after being disappointed by the "legal proofs based on tradition" and "rational arguments" the shaykhs presented to convert him to Islam; instead, he demanded empirical, "irrefutable proof that even these Mongols and Tatar horse-herders understand."[38]

The topos of test by fire strongly resonated with Inner Asian traditions. It evoked the Mongol purification rituals, including the passing between two fires to protect the khan from ominous signs, malicious spirits, and supernatural forces. Shamans appear to have continued performing the ritual at Öljeitü's court even after his conversion.[39] Recasting this refutation of Buddhist relics as a kind of fire ordeal thus revealed that Rashid al-Din was not only familiar with Inner Asian myths and his patrons' religious immanentist orientation but also that he was skillful in manipulating Mongol and Buddhist sacred symbols to reinforce Muslim claims to religious superiority.[40]

MYSTERIOUS LIGHTS: THE ISLAMIZATION OF THE CHINGGISID ORIGIN MYTH

Öljeitü's interest in personally assessing the efficacy of sacred artifacts went beyond his father's relic collection. In his treatise on shrine visitation in the *Explanation of Truths*,[41] Rashid al-Din described Öljeitü's visit during *laylat al-barāʾa* (mid-Shaʿban) in 1310 (710 AH) to the shrine of Salman al-Farisi in al-Madaʾin.[42] The shrine, the vizier explained, was a popular Iraqi destination during *laylat al-barāʾa,* as it was believed that light appeared over the sacred remains. The topic seems to have been debated in the presence of Öljeitü, who was himself skeptical, noting that "it is more reasonable that it is light descending from above [from heaven on the shrine], than that it rises from the bottom [from the grave], and this light must have a different color and shape than lights discernible by our senses." To prove his theory and further investigate the phenomenon, the inquisitive Öljeitü, Rashid al-Din, and several other courtiers ventured that same night on a boat from the royal camp near Baghdad. Unable to reach their destination on time, they camped next to an unidentified shrine on the west bank of the Tigris.

According to the treatise, a miraculous occurrence took place that night. While the Öljeitü was still half awake, "a light suddenly entered from the direction of the King of Islam's blessed foot . . . and [headed] straight, toward the pillow, left in the direction of the *qibla* [south]."[43] The next day, testimonies of the three amirs who had witnessed the light became cause for celebration. It was suggested that because Öljeitü was unable to complete his visitation, divine providence sent him the light, since "Allah guides to His light whomever He wishes" (Qurʾan 24:35). Öljeitü then ordered the vizier to build there a dome (like the dome at the shrine of Salman al-Farisi) and a hospice.

Rashid al-Din devotes the rest of the treatise to exploring and explaining the mystery, largely relying on the mystic Ghazali's theory of lights and Razi's philosophical interpretation and scaffolding thereof. According to the vizier, the souls of deceased perfect individuals, prophets, and saints are aware of and can influence events in this world. Their influence, however, varies in accordance with their level of perfection; their influence might include saintly or prophetic miracles and/or the emission of light from their shrines. This emission of light can be intentional, for example, to disprove the deniers, or unintentional, as in a natural occurrence. Just as the faces of the prophets emit in their lifetime a special kind of light, observable only by a few individuals, the same light may shine from their graves. Further, some souls, even if not granted the "perfection of the light" during their lifetime, are able to perfect themselves after their departure (see chapter 2 above) and consequently, a light may appear over their graves. The vizier concludes that this is one reason for the growing attraction and fame of the graves of prophets, saints, and other perfect souls.[44]

The theme of light passing through Öljeitü bespeaks the Islamization of the ruler's sacral status. It should be understood as part of a broader effort to reinterpret and manipulate Mongol sacred symbols that underpinned and evoked the Chinggisid myth of origin. Light descending from and ascending to heaven was a major motif in the Mongols' origin myth, according to which Chinggis Khan descended from the union between Tenggeri and the widow Alan Qo'a (Alan the Fair) of the Qorolas tribe. He appeared to her as a resplendent yellow man. He entered the tent from above, through the smoke hole, and left it in the guise of a yellow dog on a moonbeam. Subsequently, she gave birth to three sons, the youngest of whom was Chinggis Khan's progenitor, the ancestor of the heavenly "golden line" of the Chinggisids.[45]

The appearance of lights encircling or vertically ascending from the sacred corpse was also among the signs of saintly death in Buddhism.[46] The sagely Buddhist status of Altan Khan (1508–82), the Mongol warlord who initiated the second wave of Mongol conversion to Buddhism, was confirmed when his corpse emitted rainbow lights.[47] In the *Compendium* chapter in the *History of India,* the appearance of supernatural light marking the physical demise of the Buddhist sage was linked to the Buddha himself. According to the chapter, the Buddha reached nirvana after entering a translucent dome-shaped structure made of pure crystal that miraculously appeared in the city of Kusinagara (Kushinagar, in India near the border with Nepal). Once he went inside, he fell asleep and the structure closed off entirely, enshrining the Buddha. Next, a pillar-shaped light emerged from the top of the dome.[48] According to Buddhist tradition, however, the Buddha reached nirvana in a grove of Bodhi trees. The crystal-like aspect of the account may be linked to the sacred relics that appeared after his cremation: the venerated Śarīra were often described as resembling crystals.[49]

This description of the Buddha's nirvana seems to have reminded Muslim artists of traditions about Muslim shrines. In the illustrations of this scene in the *Compendium*'s manuscripts, the same structure appears made of bricks, not crystal, and is covered with a dome, but is not domed-shaped as reported in the account. Rather, the illustrated structure replicates a Persian Muslim mausoleum from the same period. Sheila Canby points out that the domed structure is akin to Öljeitü's mausoleum, with its "dome, the arched windows, the decorative frieze around the drum of the dome, and the brick building material."[50]

The association of the Buddha with the miraculous appearance of lights is found also in another of the *Compendium*'s chapters, the *History of China.* There, however, this motif is intertwined with the Buddha's birth story, which corresponds to the Chinggisid origin myth. According to the *History of China,* his newlywed mother, Muya Fujin, was still a virgin (*bikr*) when she gave birth to him. She was miraculously impregnated while resting under a tree in the garden of Lumbini (Lanbini, in the Chinese tradition) after seeing a mysterious light descend on her and then losing consciousness. After she came to, she realized she was pregnant; her right side opened; and a child emerged.[51]

This account is oddly reminiscent of both the Marian story and, more significantly, the Mongol myth of Alan Qo'a's miraculous impregnation. It indicates one of the Buddhists' assimilative strategies: establishing affinities between the Buddha and Chinggis Khan to encourage Mongol conversion (or rather reversion) to Buddhism. The account also evokes other Buddhist experimentations with the assimilation of the Mongols' origins that have left traces, for example, in the *History of India.*[52]

Like the Buddhists, Muslims also understood the significance of the Chinggisid origin myth for the Ilkhanid elite. They employed this account as a means of assimilating the Mongols by adapting the story of Alan Qo'a's miraculous impregnation to an Abrahamic context, or conversely, by ridiculing the Mongols' sacralized devotion to Chinggis Khan. While Rashid al-Din assigned the story a divine meaning, he appears to have had some reservations about the Alan Qo'a account, and therefore omitted the reference to the dog and ascribed Alan Qo'a's impregnation instead to an "abstract luminous creature." In doing so, he sidelined one of its most problematic mythic aspects from a Muslim standpoint.[53] The Mamluk encyclopedist and official ʿUmari (d. 1349), on the other hand, suggested that Alan Qo'a's account was an incredible imitation of the Marian legend intended to deceive her tribe after her extramarital affair. Timurid and Mughal authors offered a third interpretation, according to which Mary's miraculous impregnation proved the reliability of the chaste Alan Qo'a's claim.[54]

The most elaborate adaptation and extensive Islamic assimilation of the light motif in Alan Qo'a's impregnation account can be found in the fifteenth-century inscriptions on Temür's (r. 1370–1405) grave. There, the same beam of the light, which "appeared to her [in the form] of a perfect mortal" and impregnated "the

sincere and modest" Alan Qo'a, is identified as a descendant of ʿAli, thus linking Temür's claim to a sacralized Mongol ancestry to the Prophet's biological lineage.[55] According to Shiʿi traditions, Muhammad and ʿAli were formed with the same light that was equally split into two, after descending from the loins of Adam and being transmitted through procreation; the two halves subsequently reconverged in Muhammad's daughter Fatima (*majmaʿ al-nūrayn*), and through her, the light passed to Hasan and Husayn.[56]

Timurid authors behind the tombstone therefore employed assimilative displacement. They "intruded" into the Mongol myth of origin and displaced the sacred motif of the heavenly luminous being that impregnated Chinggis Khan's ancestress with a Shiʿi light motif that further assimilated Temür's Mongol origins into an Abrahamic frame, imbuing his ancestry with Islamic sanctity. This displacement was based on the close affinity and mutual translatability of Shiʿi and Chinggisid-Timurid discourses of descent-based political authority.[57] The refashioned myth appeared on Temür's tombstone and thus sanctified his burial site.

A similar assimilative displacement is used by Rashid al-Din in his account of Öljeitü's visit to Salman's shrine in 1310. Öljeitü's trip to the sacred grave followed a discussion at court about the reliability of the stories about light appearing over the grave during *laylat al-barāʾa*. Stories about witnessing lights emerging from or descending on sacred tombs were common in Muslim accounts of shrine visitation, part of the broad range of extraordinary qualities, from visions to pleasant smells, which marked holy graves. They were particularly associated with the graves of the prophets,[58] but they also played a significant role in Shiʿi accounts of the foundation of shrines, where lights appearing in a dream or vision, or witnessed above a city, indicated a hidden grave waiting to be uncovered.[59]

In Rashid al-Din's account of the Ilkhan's journey, a special beam of light, visible only to a few, passes through Öljeitü himself toward the *qibla*. This fits the Mongols' pattern of sacrality as evinced in the Chinggisid origin myth. The vizier reports on a conversation between Ghazan and the architects of his tomb complex in the village of Shamb, west of Tabriz. Like Öljeitü's mausoleum (below), this site included a charitable complex and institutions of learning and scholarship. According to Rashid al-Din, when Ghazan was asked by the workmen there about the lighting arrangement from the exterior dome to the lower tomb chamber, he answered that the tomb should be lit from within. Ghazan's speech was inspired by rhetoric comparing the "accidental illumination" emitted by the sun to that of the enlightened grave.[60]

The allusion to light emitted from Ghazan's grave underscores not only the sanctification of the Ilkhan's burial site but, more importantly, its Islamization. Öljeitü's beam of light similarly Islamizes the khan's body, reorienting, rather literally, Öljeitü's sanctity: instead of descending from heaven, linking his sacral persona to Tenggeri, the beam establishes the connection between Öljeitü (and his

new shrine) and the Kaʿaba in Mecca. This embodied connection is furthermore reflected in the epigraphic program of Öljeitü's mausoleum in Sultaniyya (below), associating Öljeitü's entombed remains with Islam's chief pilgrimage sites. As with the beam of light emitted by or passing through Öljeitü toward the *qibla,* the monarch's enshrined body is embedded into a wider network incorporating Muslim holy places and sacred graves.

CONFESSIONAL COURT POLITICS AND VISITATION OF THE DEAD

Mongol kings frequented Muslim shrines, particularly in perilous situations, such as prior to pivotal battles or as part of leisure activities during their extensive hunting expeditions. This practice predated Ghazan's conversion and did not require religious persuasion or affiliation with Islam: the Buddhist sympathizer Arghun is reported to have participated in Muslim religious festivals, and to have prayed at the shrine of Shaykh Bayazid Bistami for help against the army of his reigning uncle, the Muslim Ilkhan Tegüder.[61] Yet Muslim shrine visitations and renovations certainly gained momentum after Ghazan's conversion, as reaffirmations of royal Muslim piety.[62]

The holy sites in Iraq, especially the shrines associated with *ahl al-bayt,* the Prophet's family,[63] were particularly attractive sites for royal pilgrimage.[64] Öljeitü's visit to the shrine of Salman in 1310 was part of a special program of shrine visitations that either facilitated or immediately followed his conversion to the Shiʿi creed in late 1308 to early 1309.[65] His trip to Karbala and ʿAli's shrine in Najaf in late 1309 to 1310 was especially significant in his conversion. There the Mongol king had a dream calling on him to embrace the Shiʿi creed after a lengthy deliberation on the matter.[66]

In *Explanation of Truths,* Rashid al-Din records another visit to the shrine in 1309,[67] which appears to have marked the beginning of this royal "tour" of Iraq's holy sites. Whether this visit predated or followed the conversion, Öljeitü's deliberations on whether to adopt Shiʿism and Shiʿi efforts to encourage him, as well as the Sunni "resistance" at court (see below), all formed the background to his visit. In this visit, the Ilkhan was also accompanied by prominent Iraqi Shiʿi theologian ʿAllama Hilli (1250–1325).[68] After Öljeitü's conversion, Hilli became an important figure at court. According to Qashani, Öljeitü selected Hilli from among the learned Shiʿi scholars ordered to appear before him, and appointed him as a guide to Shiʿi dogma and jurisprudence.[69] Subsequently, Hilli was involved, alongside his son Fakhr al-Din (1283–1369), in several Sunni-Shiʿi disputations at court.[70] He was also appointed to an honorary position (likely as the Shiʿi "representative") in Öljeitü's "mobile school," established by Rashid al-Din and consisting of six teachers, experts in the Islamic sciences. These scholars may have also formed the ruler's

team of court debaters.[71] Hilli's position at court prompted several, mainly subsequent, authors to attribute Öljeitü's conversion to Shiʿism to him.[72]

Hilli's presence in the shrine visitation in 1309 further facilitated Rashid al-Din's composition of his treatise on "The Benefits of Visiting the Shrines and Graves of the Prominent." The treatise began with Hilli's question to Rashid al-Din during the visit: "there is no doubt that creed-wise, we believe in the visitation of the graves of the prominent individuals; however, since the soul is man's essence and it leaves the body and no trace of the soul remains in the body, what is the point of visiting the grave and how could it influence?"

In his answer, Rashid al-Din applies Razi's hierarchy of human souls and his theory of the visitation of graves. In a short chapter titled "An Explanation of the Merit in Visiting the Dead and the Graves," Razi summarizes his letter to his patron, the Ghurid ruler of Herat, Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad (d. 1203).[73] There he argues that disembodied souls are free of the "dust and smoke" of their corporeal state. Shining and radiating, they reach a perfection that is based on the demonstrative theoretical knowledge they have previously gained through the vessel of the body. Therefore, after their departure, they gain access to "the world of the unknown." The attachment of the departed soul to its body, which "resembles intense passion and complete love," continues for a while after an individual's demise, though less fervently. Regarding the merit of grave visitation, Razi concludes that "if the individual visits the grave of another whose soul is powerful, has perfect essence, and strong effect, and remains there for about an hour, his [the living individual's] soul would be affected from that grave, and the visitor's soul develops an attachment to that grave."[74]

Rashid al-Din builds on and expands Razi's theory. In his answer to Hilli's question, he writes that the souls of perfect individuals, whose perfection even doubles after their physical departure, are capable, in accordance with the level of their perfection, of aiding individuals who seek their intercession. Their help, however, may remain hidden. The vizier stresses the need for pure intention and correct supplication when appealing to the special dead. While physical presence at the grave is not essential, the intercessory power of saints and prophets is "most accessible at their graves,"[75] since the perfect souls pay special attention to their bodies, remaining attached to and aware of their state.

The souls of the perfect dead also pay special attention to the souls of some of the living, and grant them greater assistance, especially if they supplicate the dead with a "pure heart" and perform the "proper services" honoring the dead.[76] Rashid al-Din explains that a special attachment also develops between kin-related souls, and between those maintaining kin-like relationships—such as shaykhs and their disciples, as well as teachers and their students. If one combines such ties with the proper attitude and supplication, the result may be stronger.

The vizier highlights the relationship between departed fathers and their off-spring,[77] arguing that this is commonly known among the commoners and proved (*mujarrab*) by the fact that, in periods of hardship, one sees one's parents in a dream. Rashid al-Din further mentions the Prophet's relationship to his offspring, citing Qur'anic verses indicating that prophets and saints pray for them. If the offspring is righteous (*ṣāliḥ*), performs proper services (*khidmāt-i shāyista*), and pleads for aid with pure intention, the influence of the perfect dead in removing obstacles facing their offspring will be the strongest.[78] In this case, too, Rashid al-Din argues for a hierarchical order in which there is great variance in the form of aid provided by the dead according to their individual levels of perfection.[79]

Rashid al-Din devotes most of his treatise to explaining the benefits of shrine visitation, emphasizing the unique advantages afforded to family members who supplicate their deceased kin, particularly those of certain perfect ranks. While the vizier does not explicitly refer to the souls of sacral kings, he devotes an extensive discussion to the sacred souls of kings in his earlier treatises. As we have seen in his *Book of the Sultan,* he theorizes on the privileged group of Chinggisid auspicious kings—namely, the Sahib Qiran rulers. The vizier's answer regarding shrine visitation therefore also offers the Mongols an Islamic rationale for the centrality of ancestor veneration.

That Rashid al-Din had the Chinggisid dynastic cult in mind in his answer above is supported by the framing of his treatise on shrine visitation as a response to the question by the Shiʿi scholar. In the *Explanation of Truths,* a collection of treatises composed from 1309 to 1311, Rashid al-Din responded to the challenge that the rise of Shiʿi agents at the Ilkhanid court posed to his intimate relationship with the Mongol king. His response was part of a broader attempt to counter the overwhelming appeal that Shiʿi discourses of religiopolitical authority had for Öljeitü. Earlier scholarship tended to view Mongol domination in the Islamic world in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as defined by "confessional ambiguity"—a sectarian fluidity marked by the spread of expressions of devotion to ʿAli's household in Sunni circles. However, during the Ilkhanid period, especially around the time of Ghazan's conversion to Islam, we also find heightened sectarian polarization and a stronger demarcation of confessional boundaries, rather than a blurring of Shiʿi-Sunni lines.[80]

In the period leading to and immediately following Öljeitü's conversion to Shiʿism, the court witnessed the intensification of inter-sectarian rivalries. One of the main methods successfully employed by the Shiʿi clerics to encourage the Ilkhan's conversion was highlighting the affinities between Imami-Shiʿi conceptions of religiopolitical authority—that is, authority based on descent from the Prophet and ʿAli, and between the Mongols' own appreciation of privileged descent.[81] The Shiʿis sought to gain Ilkhanid support by comparing the allegedly unjust and oppressive usurpation of the consanguineous right of *ahl al-bayt* to the

Mongols' consecrated principle of succession through descent from the Chinggisid line. The Shiʿis further conflated this conception of inheritance and devotion to the Prophet's descendants with confessional Shiʿi identity. By blending the privileged status of *sayyidhood* (descent from the Prophet) with Shiʿi communal identity—that is, consanguineous and social categories—the Shiʿis took advantage of the Mongols' own cultural inclination toward heavenly supported bloodlines.[82]

The Ilkhanid receptivity to this approach was linked not only to the Mongols' appreciation of privileged pedigrees but also to what these equivalences and affinities offered in the way of reinforcing Chinggisid succession claims. In chapter 3, we examined how the Buddhists employed discourses of righteous Cakravartin kingship to reinforce dynastic claims of potential Chinggisid heirs in Yuan China. Rashid al-Din was keenly aware of his patrons' contested succession to the Hülegüid throne, and sought to buttress their lineage-based claims by offering a new interpretation to the title of Sahib Qiran as a king whose unique auspiciousness determined his uncontested assumption of the throne.

Shiʿism possessed multiple resources supporting Ghazan's and Öljeitü's claims to "rightful" succession. The court historian Qashani, for example, employed explicit Shiʿi references to reinforce Öljeitü's succession to his brother Ghazan, writing that Ghazan ordered on his deathbed that his previous will and designation (*naṣṣ*) of "his brother Sultan Muhammad" as his heir apparent be read publicly.[83] The terminology employed easily recalled the Prophet Muhammad's designation, according to the Shiʿi tradition, of ʿAli as his legitimate successor in Ghadir Khumm in 632.[84]

Another testimony to the receptivity of this argument came from a treatise devoted to Öljeitü's statements, conversations, and dreams. The anonymous author described an exchange between Öljeitü and his commanders, arguing that the caliph Abu Bakr's (r. 632–34) succession, based on the proximity of his seating to the Prophet and his age-determined seniority, was unjust. Öljeitü compared it to a theoretical scenario in which one of Chinggis Khan's senior Mongol commanders whose seat was near Chinggis Khan's, and whom Chinggis had praised, succeeded the founder instead of one of his descendants. All commanders present agreed that this would be illegitimate. The same rationale, Öljeitü argued, applied to the succession to the caliphate.[85]

Qashani referenced a similar conversation in which Öljeitü compared loyalty to *ahl al-bayt* to loyalty to the principle of succession within the Chinggisid bloodline and rejected the Sunni stance as disloyalty to the Prophet's house and possibly also to the Chinggisids. Yet Qashani contextualized it in relation to Öljeitü's exchanges with Hilli.[86] Thus, as a strategy, this comparison between Chinggisid and ʿAlid sacral bloodlines was clearly effective in attracting the ruler to the Shiʿi creed.

Qashani attributes the sectarian clashes at Öljeitü's court to the tension arising from the growing conversion efforts of the pro-Shiʿi faction—initially led by the

chief of the Twelver Shiʿis, Sayyid Taj al-Din Avaji (who is also credited with the Ilkhan's conversion).[87] On the opposing Sunni front was the chief Shafiʿi judge Nizam al-Din ʿAbd al-Malik,[88] reputedly the undisputed competitor at Öljeitü's court debates. Together with Rashid al-Din, who had backed Nizam al-Din's appointment, the judge was also responsible for the ruler's earlier "conversion" from the Hanafi to the Shafiʿi Madhhab. Seeking to prevent the increase in Shiʿi influence, Nizam al-Din often reproached the Shiʿis, employing rational proofs to prevent the Ilkhan from switching religious loyalties. Qashani suggested that it was only owing to the judge's absence from the court on official business during the winter of 1309 that Öljeitü's conversion to Shiʿism could be finally carried out.[89] Nizam al-Din continued disputing the Shiʿis even afterward.[90]

What role did Rashid al-Din have in this polemical court atmosphere? On the one hand, the vizier's *Explanation of Truths* reflects the Ilkhan's new confessional identity. For example, it includes a short treatise on the relationship (*nisba*) between the Sufi masters' practice of granting their mantle (*khirqa*) and the Prophet's transfer of the mantle, which had been received from Jibraʾil, to ʿAli. The treatise explores ʿAli's merits as the Prophet's rightful heir: his consanguineous and spiritual relationship with Muhammad; his unique knowledge and chivalry (*futuwwa*).[91] Court-sponsored intellectual production after Öljeitü's conversion was largely dominated by Shiʿis: while several anti-Sunni polemical works were penned by Hilli and others, no Sunni-Ashʿarite theological work was composed; certainly none was sponsored by the Mongol monarch.[92]

The vizier's penning of an ʿAlid-leaning treatise nevertheless seems to have been largely lip service to his patron's recent passion for discussing ʿAli's rightful succession—more than a testimony to a change in Rashid al-Din's own religious convictions. Indeed, the treatise refrained from discussing the contested succession or reflecting the Shiʿi claim to the usurpation of the caliphate. Rashid al-Din, furthermore, worked behind the scenes to promote the Sunni cause. Not only was he responsible for Nizam al-Din's appointment; earlier, during the reign of Öljeitü's predecessor, he vocally opposed Ghazan's support of the Shiʿi cause. He argued that if Ghazan were to impose the Shiʿi faith on the majority Sunni population, there would be a massive uprising against Ilkhanid rule.[93]

Rashid al-Din's treatise on the Prophet's mantle should be read, therefore, in the context of his efforts to navigate the muddied confessional waters of the Ilkhanid court while maintaining close ties to the new Shiʿi loyalist, Öljeitü. He adopted what amounted to a supra-confessional stance, remaining above the fray of court debates. This stance was especially evident in his treatise on the tradition "I am the city of knowledge and ʿAli its gate," according to which the answers of neither Nizam al-Din nor Hilli satisfied Öljeitü. Disappointed by both, the Ilkhan turned to Rashid al-Din, who had been conveniently absent from the debate itself, to pen a treatise on the topic based on the ruler's own comments.[94] The vizier thus posi-

tioned himself above these "minor" sectarian skirmishes, and next to Öljeitü's uniquely rational, sacral intellect. This was consistent with his mission, as professed in some of his treatises, to avoid scholarly disagreements by reconciling and harmonizing (*muwāfaqa, ṣulḥ*) a range of oppositional religious doctrines, schools, and views.[95]

Rashid al-Din's intellectual engagement with Hilli, however, was apparently more extensive. The latter's commentary on Avicenna's *Book of Healing* included about forty of the vizier's remarks. Rashid al-Din might have been seeking to gain from Hilli's expertise on the topic, yet the unique character of this work could also suggest that it reflected preparations toward or the subsequent recording of a court debate between Rashid al-Din and Hilli.[96] It seems the vizier saw Hilli less as a teacher and protégé and more as a rival. His generous praise of Hilli in *Explanation of Truths,* along with his explicit statement that Hilli thought highly of Rashid al-Din as well[97]—but especially the vizier's presentation of himself as above these sectarian-intellectual conflicts—indicated that Rashid al-Din's main goal was to diffuse a precarious situation in which the Ilkhan's new favorite scholar might encroach on the relationship the vizier had meticulously cultivated with the ruler over the years.[98] The changes to the Ilkhan's religious allegiance thus explain why the vizier was keen on assimilating his patrons' ancestor worship into Muslim traditions of grave veneration, specifically in his response to Hilli's challenge. If Rashid al-Din had earlier attempted, under Ghazan, to oppose the attraction ʿAlid loyalism had over his Mongol Muslim patrons, after Öljeitü's conversion to Twelver Shiʿism, he not only gave up resisting those ideas, but he also sought to tap into the potency of such discourses and employ them to fortify his own position at court.

With his finger carefully placed on the pulse of his patrons' desire for divinization of kingship, Rashid al-Din also laid out a theoretical groundwork for the shrine-centered manifestation of the new Chinggisid-Islamic synthesis of sacral kingship. As we have seen, in the vizier's second treatise on shrine visitation, what begins as a journey designed to satisfy Öljeitü's curiosity concludes in a tangible miraculous manifestation that unequivocally demonstrates the Mongol king's own saintliness, closing with the establishment of a shrine that concretely commemorated the ruler's sacrality.[99] The renovations to Öljeitü's tomb complex in the following years also reflected a growing effort to incorporate the Chinggisid royal cult into the Islamic world of pilgrims and shrines.

RENOVATING SULTANIYYA: ÖLJEITÜ'S NEW CULT?

Initially constructed between 1305–6 and 1313–14, Öljeitü's massive domed mausoleum in Sultaniyya was renovated soon after its completion.[100] During this second phase of renovation, which began sometime between 1313 and 1316 (the year of Öljeitü's death), the mausoleum grew. A new rectangular structure that included
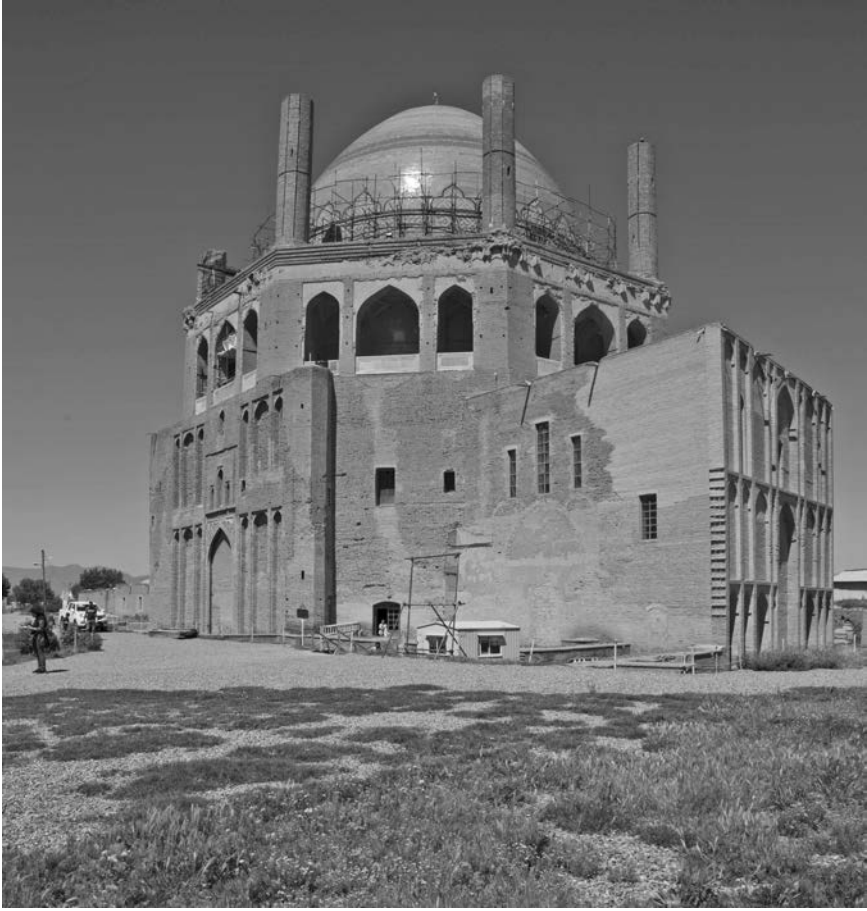
FIGURE 3. Sultaniyya: Öljeitü's domed mausoleum and rectangular structure. Photo courtesy of Golriz Farshi.

an underground multiroom crypt was appended to the south of the monumental octagonal hall built in phase one. Furthermore, the interior of the main octagonal room was redecorated with a new layer of painted plaster and tiles covering the original terracotta and tiles.[101] A new epigraphic program was added throughout the structure as well. The renovations in this second phase seem to have continued into the reign of Öljeitü's son and successor Abu Saʿid, as the date 720 (1320–21) was inscribed in the mausoleum, along with the latter's honorific title, probably to mark the end of the renovations.[102]

The mausoleum's renovation so soon after its completion in 1313 and 1314 has drawn speculation among art historians. Earlier scholarship has sought to connect
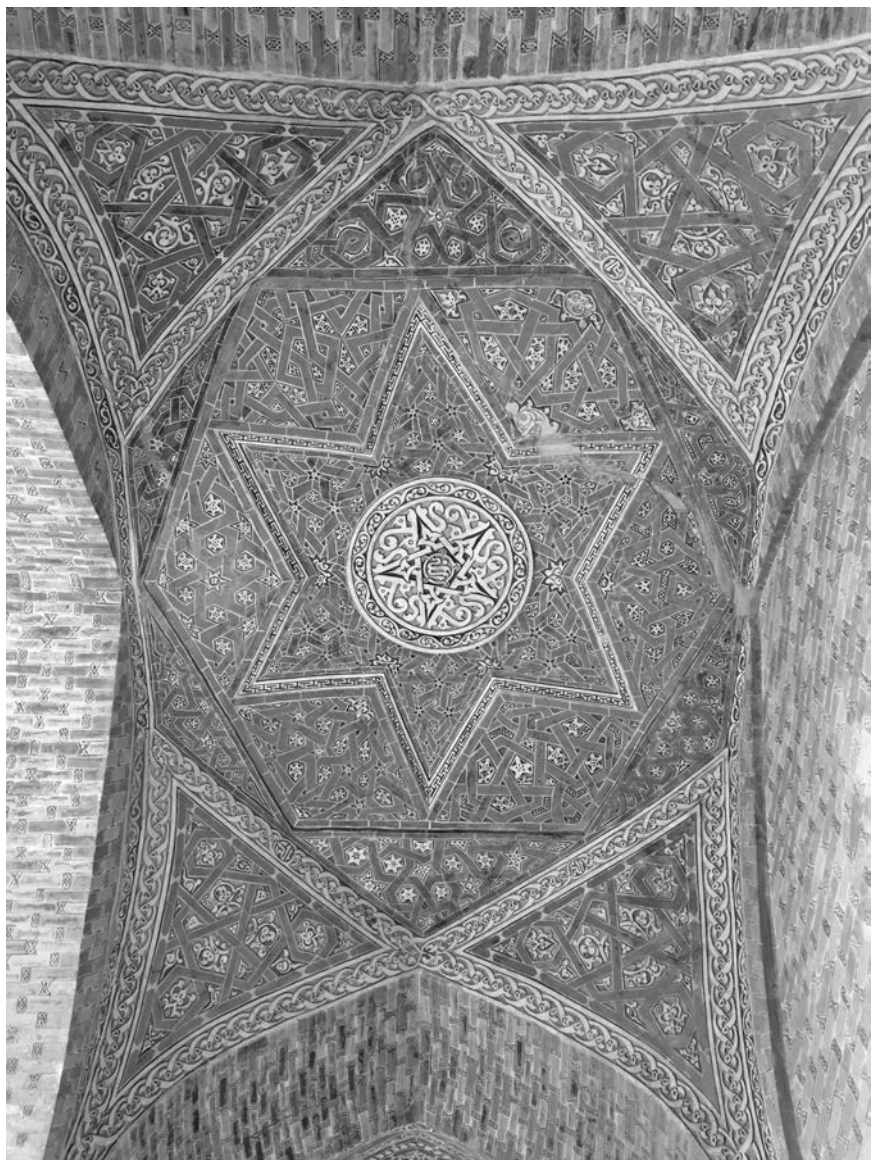
FIGURE 4. Sultaniyya: decorated gallery vault, Öljeitü's mausoleum. Photo courtesy of Golriz Farshi.

it to Öljeitü's adoption of Shiʿism, specifically linking the expansion of his tomb complex to his several visits to the holy sites of Iraq in 1309 and 1310, immediately before (or shortly after) his official conversion. Scholars have particularly noted subsequent accounts reporting Öljeitü's plans to relocate the remains of ʿAli and Husayn to his mausoleum. However, no contemporaneous Ilkhanid source confirms this plan. Two contemporary accounts from outside the Ilkhanate, one from Anatolia and the other from the Mamluk sultanate, accuse Öljeitü of planning to exhume the bodies of the first two caliphs, Abu Bakr and ʿUmar (r. 634–44), who is blamed in the Shiʿi narrative for usurping ʿAli.[103] However, these authors probably reflect Sunni anxieties about the Ilkhan's embracing of Shiʿism more than they do insider knowledge of his intentions.[104] Mustawfi Qazvini's description of the transfer of one of the Prophet's hairs to Öljeitü's tomb complex likely speaks of his general appreciation, even obsession, with the empirical power of sacral relics, as we have seen in his testing of the blessed remains of the Buddhist sages.[105]

More significantly, not only did the Ilkhan officially embrace and propagate the Shiʿi creed already during the first phase of construction;[106] the program of inscriptions in the second phase was inconsistent with this "Shiʿi thesis." In a range of scripts and sizes, the inscriptions played a prominent role in the renovations but no specifically Shiʿi verses were employed. Neither was there any clear Sunni program: the names of the first four caliphs appeared alongside the names of Hasan and Husayn, representing a more cross-sectarian, ecumenical approach, one reminiscent of the vizier's self-assumed "aloofness" in relation to his patron's Shiʿi conversion.[107] Sheila Blair suggests, therefore, that the epigraphic program referred to contemporary events. Specifically, she argues that the epigraphic program of the second phase expressed the Ilkhan's aspiration to extend his authority and patronage over the holiest sites of the Hijaz, taking advantage of internal divisions within Mecca's chieftaincy and the short lapse in Mamluk domination there in 1315 and 1316.[108] The renovations were accordingly intended to communicate Öljeitü's Islamic universalist aspirations.

Yet Blair has recently proposed a new thesis based on the way the interior space of the tomb was redesigned. The massive, nearly cardinally oriented octagonal hall was reconfigured into a gathering hall with a lavish metal grille encasing and separating the cenotaph from the assembly area.[109] Furthermore, while the tomb was designed initially to accommodate the bodies of several of Öljeitü's immediate kin in addition to the Ilkhan's, the additional multichambered crypt and the empty crypts excavated alongside the tomb suggest that the site was reconfigured to accommodate a large number of gravesites. These changes transformed the "single-room tomb into a multi-chambered place of pilgrimage with extensive services for visitors."[110] Similar formations of multiple burial chambers can be observed in other contemporary shrines. Öljeitü was attracted to the lavish styles and decorations of the saintly and ʿAlid shrines he had visited in Iraq in 1309 and 1310, and he sought

to have his tomb redesigned accordingly. His mausoleum was not only enlarged to accommodate more visitors; it was also decorated—with a clear directionality toward the cenotaph and a "glittering interior" that "would have provided a rich sensual experience for pilgrims." The new epigraphic program likewise can be read as an attempt to associate this new site with other pilgrimage destinations.[111]

The conversion of Öljeitü's tomb into a shrine complex fits the message in Rashid al-Din's two treatises that followed the Ilkhan's visits to Salman's shrine in 1309 and 1310. According to the vizier, Öljeitü was concerned with his own sacral status vis-à-vis the special dead. Thus, in the second treatise, his journey to investigate the purported lights led to the establishment of a new, generously endowed shrine, reaffirming the Ilkhan's own saintly status. As shown in chapter 4, the vizier argued indeed that the miracle-working auspicious Öljeitü possessed both "the ranks of sainthood and rulership," which were made manifest in miracles—from the Ilkhan's rain-inducing birth to his intuitive foresight and "mind reading."

The changes that Öljeitü's mausoleum underwent further indicate the significance of ancestral veneration for the Chinggisid sacral kingship and the changes in Mongol royal burial practices in the Ilkhanate. Shiʿi notions of descent-based succession, as well as decorative motifs of shrines, especially those housing ʿAlid remains, were appropriated and reconfigured as building blocks for the material and discursive scaffolding of a new Islamic royal cult. A parallel process took place with the Chinggisid veneration in Yuan China. There the imperial cult of sage-kings was revived for the Chinggisid Yuan rulers, but the Confucian-based ritual traditions were changed to favor the role of the Daoist families, and the imperial rites followed new precedents with a strong Daoist "input."[112]

EXHUMING ÖLJEITÜ: TIMURID NECROPOLITICS

The impressive design of Öljeitü's mausoleum became a source of inspiration for later shrines under post-Ilkhanid rulers, such as Temür's dynastic tomb in Samarqand.[113] Similarly, Öljeitü's model of sacral saintly kingship, synthesizing both sainthood and sovereignty, was later followed and expanded, especially by Temür's successors, into a new model of kingship imagined and performed both corporeally and ritually. In the Timurid period, Öljeitü's sanctity, represented and embodied by his mausoleum, was a source of visual inspiration and imitation, as well as of enmity and rivalry.

Nearly a century after his death, Öljeitü's remains were exhumed and mutilated. According to the Castilian ambassador Ruy González de Clavijo, Temür's son Miranshah (d. 1408), whose appendage included the *ulus-i Hülegü* and who was therefore governor of the former Ilkhanid Tabriz and Sultaniyya, set out on a rampage of demolition, ordering the destruction of many of Tabriz's and Sultaniyya's finest buildings.[114] These included Öljeitü's "magnificent tomb." Miranshah went a

step further, ordering "the body of the founder that lay buried there" to be "forthwith thrown out, lying on the ground to perish dishonored." According to the ambassador, while some claimed that Miranshah was driven by madness—an accusation leveled also by Timurid authors, most of whom were unfavorable to Miranshah's legacy[115]—others reported that the prince said the following: "I am the son of the greatest man in the whole world, what now can I do in these famous cities, that after my days I may be always remembered?" Since his attempts to consolidate his legacy through lavish building projects failed, Miranshah decided that he should be remembered instead for pulling down "the finest buildings of the whole world."[116]

Sultaniyya, "the dynastic necropolis of the Ilkhans," was integral to the Timurid dynasty's claim to inherit the Ilkhans.[117] Temür traveled there to check on his son after he learnt of the havoc, and Miranshah begged for his father's mercy. Was Miranshah's demolition directed against the Ilkhanid legacy? Did it demonstrate his disregard for his Mongol predecessors? Historians have suggested that these measures were part of the prince's more calculated and ambitious plan to show independence from his father's patrimony and base his legitimacy on the claim to inheritance of rule over the regions identified as the core domains of the Ilkhans. Miranshah, indeed, was not content with his position as a princely appanage holder but saw himself as an independent ruler aspiring to succeed his father to the entire realm.[118]

Miranshah and his sons also made the case for the reassertion of the Chinggisid political principles and thus their right to succeed by virtue of their Chinggisid credentials through marriage and descent in the Timurid inheritance struggles that ensued after Temür's demise.[119] Yet, if Chinggisid ideology played a significant role in the "Miranshahid dispensation,"[120] why would he exhume Öljeitü's corpse and let it rot in the sun? One way to reconcile these conflicting reports is that his defilement of Öljeitü's monumental shrine was an act of ritualized violence meant to demonstrate his own superior "Chinggisid" claim over the shrine.[121] The violent desecration of the dynastic grave was perhaps even meant to be followed by his own replacement of the Ilkhan's body, asserting his material and spiritual—immanentist—takeover of the center of Ilkhanid dynastic veneration. By successfully unearthing and disrupting Öljeitü's final place of rest, and without being subjected to divine punishment, Miranshah demonstrated his supernatural superiority and his worthiness, in Mongol (empirical) terms as well.

Another, not entirely implausible, option to consider is that Öljeitü's grave was targeted because of his Shiʿi affiliation. Is it possible that Miranshah attempted to build on the sectarian tensions of the Ilkhanid court nearly a century earlier to project himself as the protector of Sunnism, an image that his brother Shahrukh would later publicly adopt?[122] Indeed, another victim of the Timurid prince's "necropolitics" and vandalism was the corpse of the vizier Rashid al-Din, confirming that Miranshah was invested in the Ilkhanid court's confessional politics as well.

Miranshah had the vizier's bones exhumed from the *Rabʿ-i Rashīdī* in Tabriz and reburied in the Jewish cemetery.[123] Despite his major contribution to shaping the Islamic legacy of his Mongol patrons, the convert Rashid al-Din was never quite able to leave his Jewish legacy behind.

CONCLUSION

The Mongol and Timurid periods represented the height of the cult of saints in the Persian world. As Sufi complexes dramatically expanded into monumental and extravagant shrines, drawing in pilgrims by offering essential services—from hospices and hospitals to schools and mosques—the political power of Sufi shaykhs grew considerably. The notion of the Sufi sage as the "true" sovereign accordingly gained popularity, and Sufi rituals were refashioned to express the shaykhs' new claims. However, shrine-centered Sufism also became a potent mechanism for legitimating and sacralizing a new type of Islamic kingship.[124] The ruler's generous patronage and recurrent visits to major shrines became integral to the performance of Muslim monarchs, paralleling the temple-centered kingship of India, where, under Islamic rule, these two overlapping modes of kingship would ultimately converge.[125] As a result, as Azfar Moin observes, "hereditary cults and dynastic lines became, in effect, physically and materially blurred as the courts and shrines in Iran and India came to adopt the same repertoire of sacrality and style of sovereignty."[126] This increased discursive conflation or even symbiotic relationship between the two authorities—sainthood and kingship—ultimately led, as Matthew Melvin-Koushki notes, to the replacement of the saintly-royal cooperation with "a fierce and protracted struggle between sultan and saint for control of Islamdom during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; Sufis became sultans (as with the Safavids) and sultans became saint-kings (as with the Mughals and Ottomans)."[127]

The evolution of shrine-centered kingship in dialogue with the cult of saints finds precedents in Öljeitü's tomb complex as well: the impressive shrine of Baraq Baba, who gained the Ilkhan's admiration after taming a wild tiger, is located just a few hundred meters southwest of Öljeitü's mausoleum. The shrine was built around 1310 by Öljeitü after the shaykh's remains were carried to the site from Gilan. To further commemorate the posthumous link by the king and the shaykh, Öljeitü's son Sulaymanshah, who died young, was buried in Baraq's shrine.[128]

As this chapter has shown, Rashīd al-Dīn's discussion of grave visitation and the renovated mausoleum of Öljeitü reflect the Ilkhanid experimentation with discursive and material building blocks of a new Islamic royal cult centered on Öljeitü and his Chinggisid dynasty. The vizier's work and Öljeitü's shrine demonstrate the contribution of the process of Islamizing the Chinggisid ancestor veneration and the Ilkhans' interest in Shiʿi concepts of authority to the emergence of this new mode of shrine-centered kingship.

Epilogue

Kingship and the Court Debate after the Mongols

Ruzbihan Khunji Isfahani (d. 1521) was among the Persian scholars who fled Iran owing to the advancement of Shah Ismaʿil (r. 1501–24) and his troops. He found refuge at the Bukharan court of Muhammad Shaybani Khan (d. 1510), a ruler with Chinggisid credentials who led a massive army of Turkic nomads.[1] In the *Guest Book of Bukhara*, Khunji's memoire of his two-year residence at Shaybani Khan's court (1508–10), we find that the lion share of his encounters with the khan took place in scholarly assemblies, where various philosophical, theological, and legal issues were discussed under the ruler's gaze. As was the case with the debates at the court of the Mongol Ilkhans, scholars like Khunji were summoned to offer their comments and responses for the sultan's appraisal.[2] Moreover, as in Rashid al-Din's account of these courtly exchanges, Khunji also presented himself as dominating the intellectual arena at court.[3]

Despite this similarity, Khunji's encounter with Rashid al-Din's works in Bukhara may have been serendipitous. Shaybani's men appear to have brought with them a remarkable manuscript of the *Collected Writings of Rashid al-Din* from one of their campaigns in Khurasan.[4] In the *Guest Book,* Khunji comments on the manuscript's fine handwriting and golden inscriptions. He identifies its author as the renowned Tabrizi *ṭabīb* Rashid al-Din, and describes its content as "comprised of problems, questions, and special objections that the scholars of the time had asked him, as well as the answers he himself provided, and [which] the scholars found correct and commended."[5]

The manuscript, in fact, was the object of great interest at the Shaybanid court. Once, in an assembly of eminent scholars that took place during the breaking of the fast, Shaybani Khan ordered Khunji to open the manuscript on a random page,

read it, and comment on its content. He read Rashid al-Din's commentary on the Qur'anic verse 57:4 ("It is He who created the heavens and earth in six days").[6] Khunji, however, was not impressed by Rashid al-Din's thoughts, and provided his own interpretation. Shaybani Khan responded favorably, and, as Öljeitü would so often do during his court debates, he concluded the discussion by adding his own remarks and observations.[7] Two centuries after Rashid al-Din's demise, his scholarly legacy—the product of the Ilkhanid arena of intellectual and religious competitions and disputations—was employed as a "prop" to induce and inspire intellectual exchanges and debates at the court of another Chinggisid king.[8]

Like the Mongol Ilkhans before him, Shaybani Khan also sought to use scholarly assemblies and debates to establish his own reputation as a ruler of exceptional intellect, an early modern Persianate philosopher king. Was Shaybani Khan aware of the Chinggisid-Ilkhanid legacy of court debates as arenas for the performance of their divinized kingship? After browsing Rashid al-Din's scholarly collections, he would certainly not have been able to ignore the Mongol precedent. Not only did Rashid al-Din's treatises constantly refer to such intellectual engagements at the Ilkhanid court; as we have seen throughout this book, the Ilkhans, especially Öljeitü, emerged from his writings as playing an active, crucial role in these court audiences and intellectual contests. Did the fifteenth-century Chinggisid ruler consciously try to follow the example of his Ilkhanid predecessors as initiators of, presiders over, and energetic participants in their courts' lively intellectual scenes? Or was he simply following a model of rulership that, by his time, had already become ubiquitous, an essential part in the performance of Turkic-Mongol sovereignty?

Shaybani could have easily been inspired by the example of his enemies, the Timurids (1370–1507), who had claimed succession to the imperial rule of the Ilkhans in Iran and Central Asia. Following the model of their dynastic founder's passion for orchestrating and presiding over debates,[9] the Timurids also staged intellectual disputations to perform and reaffirm the Perso-Mongol ruler's intellectual superiority.[10] Shaybani's performance in court debates may be attributed to the new model of early modern Islamic sovereignty that had its roots in the synthesis of the Mongol institution of court debates and contests, as well as the Muslim tradition of scholarly gatherings in the ruler's presence (the *majlis*).

Under the Timurids' successors, the Mughal sultans of India (1526–1857), whose expansion to and subsequent rule over India were triggered by Shaybani's invasions of their homeland in Central Asia, this performance of sacral kingship via the arena of interreligious debate and intellectual competition reached its zenith. The Mughals established a cosmopolitan empire in India that envisioned itself as heir to the Timurids and Mongols through shared genealogical, linguistic, historiographical, and political links, as well as common universalist aspirations.[11] Mughal court culture exhibited many patterns of empirical religiosity and imma-

nentist kingship that were similar to those of the Chinggisids. Emperor Akbar (1542–1605) had empiricist and practical preferences: being illiterate, the emperor preferred things he could tangibly experience and judge to abstract, doctrinal concepts.[12] Interlinked with this empirical logic was his cultivation of court contests.[13] Interfaith debates that included Catholics, Brahmans, Jains, Muslims, and others were central to courtly life.[14] Just as arenas and rings for animal tournaments, races, and fights were established for the emperor's pleasure, so was Akbar's House of Worship (ʿIbādatkhāna) built especially for intellectual contests and audiences.[15] Like Öljeitü, the illiterate Akbar was presented as possessing a unique, supreme, and innate intellect that was not based on learning and books. He was said to privilege reason over the blind imitation of tradition. The emperor set out to resolve the discord and confusion between religions and creeds through his own independent judgment.[16] An epitome of human reason, Akbar's supreme position as a mujtahid, an authority to decide questions of religious doctrine and law, was reaffirmed in a decree in 1579.[17]

Akbar's son Jahangir (1569–1627) was fascinated by material, visual, and talismanic religious representations.[18] Jahangir was also the ultimate arbiter of reason:[19] at the end of each of his interfaith debates, he would determine and announce whether the answers of each party accorded with reason.[20] His display of exceptional rational and empirical insight buttressed his legitimate succession to his father and his Timurid ancestors.[21] Like the Mongol khans, the Mughals were not simply "detached observers" but active participants and performers in these intellectual encounters.[22]

Jahangir was also keen on having the intellectual and religious debates and exchanges at his nightly assemblies documented. Like Öljeitü's interventions in Rashid al-Din's treatise,[23] Jahangir was directly involved in producing these documents, insisting, for example, that ʿAbd al-Sattar (d. after 1619), the author of *Assemblies of Jahangir* (*Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*), be present at the sessions. When the latter was absent, Jahangir made sure that other courtiers informed ʿAbd al-Sattar of what had transpired during the debates. Occasionally, Jahangir would even inspect ʿAbd al-Sattar's work, making comments and ordering corrections.[24] Like his father Akbar and his great-grandfather Babur (1483–1530), who penned his own memoire, Jahangir belonged to a new brand of post-Mongol sultans who took a proactive and interventionist approach to recording their own intellectual and spiritual achievements, whether through the written records of scholarly assemblies or through their own journals and letters.[25]

Interreligious translatability, nonexclusivity, and ecumenism also remained predominant patterns, and proved the most resilient (and "problematic") aspects of the Mongol immanentist heritage in early modern Eurasian courts. Like the Mongol rulers, Akbar and his son did not consider their Muslim affiliation as excluding them from inquiring into and exuberantly borrowing from other

religious systems.[26] They favored universalizing translatability, transparency, and commensurability over differentiation, exclusion, and boundary work.[27] Mughal religious pluralism and inclusiveness became an imperial ideology—*ṣulḥ-i kull,* total peace with all religions.[28] Like Akbar, the Ottoman sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (r. 1444–46, 1451–81) demanded rational inquiry rather than resorting to scripture during the frequent interreligious and intellectual debates over which he presided. He was also keen on being considered a model ruler, an illuminated philosopher king, who, in addition to being a Muslim monarch, also stood above the fray, being independent from the confessional divisions in his empire.[29]

The prominence of debates and intellectual duels at the courts of the Mongols' successor empires—the Timurids and their Mughal successors, the Ottomans and Central Asian rulers such as Shaybani Khan—as well as the rulers' display of immanentist patterns demonstrate that the Islamic-transcendentalist domestication of the Chinggisid divinized authority, which involved as much accommodation and reconciliation as it did conversion and manipulation, was an ongoing process. It continued to evolve in imperial courts in the centuries following the Ilkhanate's political decline in the middle of the fourteenth century.

The court debate was not the only enduring impact of the Mongols' ideological patterns and mode of religiosity on Eurasian polities. The idea of the sultan as a heavenly designated reformer and auspicious king whose authority came from direct divine intervention in human history became an important foundation of early modern courtly theories of legitimate rulership. These were expressed in the widespread sultanic appropriation of the religious, messianic, and ideologically charged titles of the Mujaddid, Sahib Qiran, and caliph—titles that, as we have seen, Rashid al-Din employed, reinterpreted, and charged with ethical salvific meaning as well.[30] The sultan's auspiciousness continued to be measured by empirical, immanentist standards, and to be represented in righteous, transcendentalist terms.[31] And as we saw in the last chapter, the Ilkhanid experimentation with accommodating and converting the Chinggisid royal cult in fourteenth-century Iran also had parallels with later Mughal, Safavid, and Ottoman engagements with a new style of shrine-centered sovereignty that drew on Sufi and Shiʿi discourses of authority and cultic veneration.[32] Eurasian imperial courts, moreover, continued to engage with other Chinggisid political and cultural legacies, such as the dynastic principle, according to which the right to rule was reserved to the Chinggisid line alone, or the institution of dynastic law, *yasa,* and the image of the ruler as lawmaker.[33]

To consolidate the conversion and commitment of his Mongol patrons to Islam, the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din followed a path blazed by the Buddhists at the Mongol court. He did so not by appropriating Buddhist concepts but by creatively employing the Islamic and Persian resources at his disposal in ways that both significantly paralleled and differed from the Buddhist methods of accommodation

and subversion of the Mongols' divinized kingship. The vizier's direct and indirect interactions with the Buddhist world led him to experiment with new political theologies and to appropriate and translate theological-philosophical concepts from the intellectual to the political sphere. Rashid al-Din's Buddhist- and Mongol-informed experimentation in Islamic theological discourses represented an intermediate stage between the two most dominant frameworks for legitimizing sultanic authority—the pre-Mongol phase of a restrictive, legalistic-caliphal structure, and the widespread adoption of models of sacred kingship in the post-Mongol Islamic world. Rashid al-Din's work set the stage for much of the subsequent experiments with new vocabularies of sultanic rule that would become a defining feature of early modern Eurasian connected histories.[34]

N O T E S

1. William's account of the interfaith debate was also the first documented encounter of a European with Buddhism. See Jackson 2009, 226–35; Young 1989, 130–33; Kedar 1999.

2. Elverskog 2010.

3. On the term, see Jackson 1988.

4. Rashīd al-Dīn 1976–77, 36–37.

5. In the "Questions of Mellinda," the sage is asked to explain the Buddhist understanding of the infinity of time and the cycle of suffering. He uses the following metaphor: "An egg comes from a hen and a hen from an egg and an egg from a hen—is there thus an end of this series?" See Mendis 1993, 48.

6. Kedar 1999.

7. Mir-Kasimov 2014, 11.

8. Binbaş 2014, 300; Markiewicz 2019, 6–7.

9. Markiewicz 2019, 240.

10. Jackson 2006, 3–10; Amitai 2013a, 43–45.

11. *Möngke tengri-yin küchün-dür; qaʾan-u suu-dur* (Mongolian). See Aigle 2005, 147–48.

12. Golden 1982, 37–77.

13. De Rachewiltz 1973, 168–69; de Rachewiltz 2007, 117–31; Baumann 2013.

14. Fletcher identifies this as the merit-based *tanistry*. See Fletcher 1986, 16–19.

15. Atwood 2004b; Brack 2019b.

16. Elverskog 2006, 50, 53.

17. Brack 2016, 38–81.

18. Elverskog 2006, 48–52.

19. Atwood 2013.

20. Strathern 2017, 25–26.

21. Buddhism, for example, is conceptualized in "uncompromisingly transcendentalist" terms. Yet it also accepts and yields to certain immanentist tendencies, by leaving "the sphere of relations with metapersons to proceed," and by promoting the Buddha's deification and the cult of his relics, as in the case of Mahayana Buddhism. See Strathern 2019b, 92–95.

22. Strathern 2019b, 155–218; Strathern 2019a, 50–51.

23. Strathern 2017; Strathern 2019b, 226–29.

24. DeWeese 1994, 32–39.

25. Lane 2016, 236. The Mongols did not differentiate between philosophers, holy men, magicians, and others. They gathered individuals from as many provenances and specializations as possible to provide them with "the maximum protective umbrella and the best advice." See Amitai 2014, 31.

26. Allsen 2001, 201–2.

27. Court contests also functioned as the "bazaar of ideas," where "spiritual and intellectual vendors" showcased their cultural and religious "wares" for their potential appropriation by the Mongols. See Lane 2016, 235–36, 39.

28. DeWeese 1994, 173–74.

29. According to Bar Hebraeus, the shamans' disadvantage was that they lacked scriptures to reference. He further states that the shamans subsequently continued to serve alongside the Buddhists. See Bar Hebraeus 1932, 355.

30. Atwood 2014. The Mongols did not categorize their lay subjects by religious affiliation. The clergy alone were legally recognized with religious status. They formed a subset of the occupational category of tax-exempted technical professionals servicing the empire (alongside diviners, physicians, artisans, and "foreign" experts). The ambiguity of religious and ethnic identifications in the terms the Mongols employed in their edicts is further evidence of the initial lack of a distinguishable, abstract category of religion among the Mongols. See Atwood 2022, 803–6. Immanentist traditions, indeed, do not distinguish "religion" (and thus also, clergy and religious customs) as a separate sphere of life. Religion was "above all a matter of practice and communal affiliation, not of 'belief'" (DeWeese 1994, 101n73). See also Strathern 2019b, 45.

31. DeWeese 2009, 120–34.

32. On the Buddhist-Muslim competition in Yuan China and the strategies used by Buddhists such as presenting themselves as "natives" to China while arguing that their Muslim peers were "commercially minded interlopers" impersonating clergy for the sake of tax evasion, see Atwood 2016.

33. On this "offensiveness" as inherent to transcendentalism, see Strathern 2019b, 61–63.

34. Ibid., 46–47; Assmann 1997, 3.

35. Jackson 2006.

36. Jackson 1990, 236–37.

37. Baumann 2013. Tenggeri governed the earth and decided the destiny of men, but it was ethically ambiguous; it was not bound to a universal system of good and evil, salvation and damnation. The Mongols did not separate, in other words, "the realm of 'political' morality from a wider 'cosmic' morality" (Humphrey and Hürelbaatar 2005, 23).

38. Assmann 2012, 371. On metapersons as part of human cosmopolitics, see Sahlins 2017, 36–51; Strathern 2019b, chap. 1.

39. The immanentist process of state building can push "ambitious rulers towards the exaltation of an overarching deity of the sun or skies," supporting their political claim to universal domination mirrored in the "metapersonal reality" of one principal deity. See Strathern 2019b, 132–34. Baumann argues that the Mongols exhibited the Eurasian "non-exclusive concept of henotheism" and polytheism: specific deities were attached to specific purposes and times. See Baumann 2008, 49–51.

40. Historians debate whether the Mongol religious pluralism expressed their religious indifference or their "steppe pragmatism." See Morgan 2007, 37–38; Foltz 1999, 44–45. Jackson suggests that it represented a near-consecrated principle anchored in the *yasa*, the Mongol code of law attributed to Chinggis Khan. See Jackson 2017, chap. 11.

41. Crossley 2019, 207–8.

42. In accordance with the Mongols' religious rationality, the breaking of ritual or purity taboos—which prevented the smooth operation of the cosmos, and therefore threatened the khan's spiritual safety and power (since it hindered heaven's blessing)—might be heavily punished. The refusal to abide by Mongol taboos or the reluctance to comply with Chinggisid customs could be considered, therefore, defiant acts against Chinggisid supremacy that furthermore evoked Tenggeri's displeasure. In some of these cases, the Mongols displayed their "intolerance" of such "disrespect" or "religious transgression." See Jackson 2017, 304; Brack 2022.

43. Jackson 2017, 336–37.

44. Brack 2022.

45. Elverskog 2006, 115–16; Charleux 2010.

46. Allsen 2001, 200.

47. Strathern 2019b, 224.

48. Strathern 2007, 365; Jackson 2018, 310.

49. Atwood 2010.

50. ʾPhags-pa 1983, 39–43.

51. Amitai 2004, 124; Biran 2007, 114–21; Brack 2018, 1164–65.

52. DeWeese 1994; Ricci 2011, 21.

53. Crossley 2019, 214.

54. Pfeiffer 2006, 371.

55. Strathern 2007.

56. Kamola 2019, 29–31; Netzer 1994, 118–26.

57. His full name was Abū al-Faraj ʿĀlī/Eli, son of Abū Shujāʾ.

58. The Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs, known as the Assassins (for their clandestine political assassinations of their enemies), were a branch of the revolutionary Shīʿī Ismāʿīlī sect in the Persian-speaking world. Resisting the Saljuq pro-Sunnī policies, the Nizārīs established their own polity centered on a network of isolated fortresses and inaccessible mountain strongholds that extended throughout the Iranian domains. See Virani 2007.

59. Rashīd al-Dīn 1957, 3:35–37; Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 3:483, 485; Netzer 1994, 122. Ṭūsī might have introduced the family to Hülegü. See Krawulsky 2011, 119–20.

60. The Jewish communities that are reported to have resided among the Ismāʿīlī strongholds might have encouraged the family's flight. See Benjamin of Tudela 1907, 120–21. Kamola suggests that the family likely maintained its ties with the community in Hamadān, even though the vizier was probably born in Maymūndiz. See Kamola 2019, 31.

61. Ṭūsī 1964, 24–25.

62. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī 1995, 2:62; 5:613.

63. On Rashīd al-Dīn's medical training, see Kamola 2019, 32–33; Pfeiffer 2016, 80–81; Hoffmann 2013, 9.

64. For example, Saʿd al-Dawla: Amitai 2013b, 39–41; Brack 2019a, 374–403. These appointments (as well as appointments of other high-ranking non-Muslims) were received with hostility by the Muslim majority, who struggled to come to terms with the Mongols' nonpartisan treatment of the religions. See Jackson 2017, 310, 315. The practice of employing non-Muslims in government, even giving them high-ranking posts, was common across the Islamic world but was nevertheless met with opposition and disapproval by Muslim scholars. For the evolving prescriptive discourse criticizing and lamenting the appointment of non-Muslim officials by Muslim patrons and its relationship to the concrete political reality of the competition over material, social, and political resources, see Yarbrough 2019.

65. According to the vizier's protégée Munshī Kirmānī, Geikhatu offered Rashīd al-Dīn the vizierate, but the latter declined, remaining in his position as court physician and an unofficial advisor. See Munshī Kirmānī 1959, 112.

66. Shabānkāraʾī (d. 1337) wrote that the Jewish (mūsavī) doctor Rashīd al-Dīn had converted as late as Öljeitü's reign. See Shabānkāraʾī 1984, 270.

67. Qāshānī 2005, 54–55, 131–32, 240–41; Krawulsky 2011, 132–33. The Mamluk sources are united in emphasizing Rashīd al-Dīn's previous Jewish identity (designating him Rashīd al-Dawla); they also accuse the vizier of falsifying and corrupting the Qurʾan. See Amitai-Preiss 1996b, 32–33; Chipman 2013, 115–26; Rajabzāda 1998, 113–15.

68. The title (laqab) ʿImād al-Dawla (state pillar), instead of ʿImād al-Dīn (al-Dawla was commonly used for non-Muslim—Jewish and Christian—state officials), indicates that he remained Jewish.

69. He describes his father himself as having the likeness of Muslims in his gnosis and righteous intention. His father was held with great esteem by Muslim scholars.

70. See Rashīd al-Dīn's treatise an "Answer to the adversaries": Krawulsky 2011, 123, 132–33; Rashīd al-Dīn 2015b, 2:512–13; Rajabzāda 1998, 128–29.

71. Amitai-Preiss 1996b, 26.

72. According to Bar Hebraeus, the Jew served as a cook and attempted to increase the revenue for the depleted state treasury; he paid for the Ilkhan's meals from his own pocket and, when he ran out of funds, he fled for his life. See Bar Hebraeus 1932, 496. On the importance of the position of the cook (ba'urchi), see Allsen 2001, 127–29; Amitai-Preiss 1996b, 25–26. In his vaqfiyya (endowment deed) for the Rabʿ-i Rashīdī, the vizier depicts himself as a "humble cook" employed in a charity kitchen in comparison to the magnanimity of the Ilkhan. See Hoffmann 2013, 12.

73. On his ties with Yazd, see Mancini-Lander 2019, 1–24.

74. While the sources are vague about the division of labor between the two, or even about the exact nature of Rashīd al-Dīn's official post, Rashīd al-Dīn is frequently portrayed as carrying the main load of state administration. See Kamola 2019, 50–51.

75. Qāshānī 2005, 122–28.

76. Morgan 1994, 8:443–44.

77. Morgan 1997, 179–88.

78. Shabānkāraʾī 1984, 270. Rashīd al-Dīn repeatedly reasserts in his theological works his intimate and close relationship with the Ilkhans Ghazan and Öljeitü.

79. Kamola 2019, 160; Fischel 1953, 18.

80. Melville 2008, 462–68; Kamola 2019, 95.

81. The second volume was also meant to include the history of Öljeitü's reign, but this section has either been omitted or was never completed. Öljeitü also commissioned a third volume on geography that is missing as well.

82. Kamola 2019, 95. For the impact of Rashīd al-Dīn's history on later historiographical patterns, see, for example, Quinn 2021, 160–63.

83. Rashīd al-Dīn claims that this second volume, the world history, was commissioned by Öljeitü after his enthronement in July 1304. Qāshānī, however, dates the authorship of his general, world history (his *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*), which was the basis for most of the *Compendium's* second volume, to the reign of Öljeitü's predecessor, Ghazan. Qāshānī completed its chapters over a period of four years, from 1300 to 1303/4, roughly until Ghazan's death. Furthermore, he continued to update it after 1304 and as late as 1315/16, nearly a decade after Rashīd al-Dīn presented the *Compendium* to Öljeitü. See Otsuka 2018; Morton 2010, 166–77; Kamola 2019, 95–103; Brack 2016, 322–44.

84. Qāshānī 2005, 54–55, 240–41.

85. Blair 2016; Hoffmann 2014, 171–85.

86. Morgan 1994, 182–83; Pfeiffer 2013, 62. Blochet, in contrast, argued that, unlike Rashīd al-Dīn, Qāshānī "was a professional historian and not an amateur." See Blochet 1910, 151.

87. See note 83 above.

88. Allsen 2001, 72–80; Lambton 1998, 126–54.

89. Van Ess 1981, 12–21; Krawulsky 2011, 77–86.

90. Rashīd al-Dīn 1976–77, 243–44.

91. Öljeitü prominently features in these court discussions. See, for example, Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 87.

92. Qāshānī 2005, 106–7.

93. Pfeiffer 1999, 38–39; Qāshānī 2005, 96.

94. Pfeiffer 1999, 37.

95. Lefèvre 2012, 260; England 2017; Pfeifer 2022, 7–9; Mauder 2021, 63–70.

96. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-asʾila.* Ms. Ayasofya 2180, fols. 33–44.

97. He claimed to be the sole individual able to understand the Ilkhan's brilliant comments and to properly answer his riddles. See, for example, ibid., 27v.

98. Rashīd al-Dīn 1993, 2:23–25.

99. Similarly, in the Ottoman Empire, such gatherings (salons), representing a spectrum of elite assemblies, were extremely important for scholars seeking to build their reputation or for the unemployed seeking a new patron, mixing thus leisure and "hard work." See Pfeifer 2022, 9–10.

100. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-sulṭāniyya,* Ms. Nuruosmaniye 3415, fol. 15v. For Mustawfī Qazvīnī, see Kamola 2019, 163–70; Marlow 2018.

101. El-Rouayheb 2016, 408–11.

102. Treiger 2012; Endress 2006, 398–99 (for the "Hellenization of the language of *kalām*").

103. Sabra 1994, 11.

104. Endress 2006, 397; Eichner 2009.

105. Jaffer 2015, 68–69.

106. Wisnovsky 2013, 349–78.

107. Shihade 2016, 299–304.

108. Eichner 2009, x–xiii, 133–34; Endress 2016, 416–18.

109. On Rāzī's influence on Shīʿī authors, see Schmidtke 1991. On West Syriac (Jacobite) Christian theology, see Takahashi 2014, 170–92; Jacobs 2018, 187–216.

110. Roggema 2022, 84–89; Rassi 2022, 84–89.

111. For the contribution of Rāzī's work on logic and his discussions of categorical and relational syllogisms, see el-Rouayheb 2010, 48.

112. Belhaj 2016, 291–307; el-Rouayheb 2015, 60–96.

113. Sabra 1994, 15–17; Eichner 2009, 425–72; Endress 2006, 416. Rashīd al-Dīn was al-Ījī's court patron: see Ibn al-Fuwaṭī 1995, 1:411–12; van Ess 2016. Al-Ījī also enthusiastically "endorsed" Rashīd al-Dīn's Quranic commentary in the vizier's *Tawżīḥāt-i Rashīdī*. See Krawulsky 2011, 90. Al-Ījī was a member of Öljeitü's mobile school (*madrasa sayyāra*). See Qāshānī 2005, 106.

114. Schmidtke 1991. Among the other intellectual figures at the court who enjoyed royal patronage and engaged with Rāzī's work was the Shīʿī Qurʾanic exegetist and author of scientific astronomical works Niẓām al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī (d. ca. 1330). See Morrison 2007, 41–44.

115. We should also consider the vizier's own familial connection to the Marāgha intellectual circles (above), which facilitated the reception of Rāzī's works.

116. On the vizier as a self-taught, "intuitive" theologian, see Rashīd al-Dīn 1976–77, 35–51. The vizier furthermore tends to reference his own earlier treatises, and is less inclined to admit his reliance on earlier authors. For Rashīd al-Dīn as a "*homo novus*," see Van Ess 1981, 44.

117. Especially, since, like them, the vizier, too, found his theology heavily criticized. See Klein-Franke 2002, 199–214; Hoffmann 2013, 11; Van Ess 1981, 9–10. Some contemporaneous authors claimed the vizier himself as the "centennial renewer" (Mujaddid) of the eighth Hijri century. See Vaṣṣāf 1959–60, 539.

118. Shihadeh 2006; Shihadeh 2005, 70–77. See the vizier's discussion of the place of the perfect (Mongol) kings in the hierarchy of sacred souls: Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 261. Rāzī's "controversies" (Munāẓarāt) might have furthermore served as a model for Rashīd al-Dīn's collections of answers. See Kholeif 1966; Kamola 2019, 109.

119. Ahmed 2016, 26–27; Ebstein 2016, 488–523.

120. Melvin-Koushki 2018, 353–77; Binbaş 2014, 293.

121. Subrahmanyam 1997; Subrahmanyam 2003.

122. For example, see Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 353–54, 401–2 (the vizier's treatise on *Sharḥ-i ʿulūm-i maʿaqūl va-manqūl*).

123. For example, the vizier's discussion of the Prophet's illiteracy (*ummiyya*) as an apologetic technique, see Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 202–4.

124. He writes of Öljeitü's remark at a court debate about the superior position of the rational individual over the knowledgeable person, and he discusses the case of Ibn Kammūna in this regard. Despite the latter's abundant knowledge, he could not tell the difference between the true and the false religion. In failing to convert to Islam, he failed to save his soul from hell. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015b, 2:761.

125. Ben Azzouna 2014, 190–99.

126. Krawulsky 2011, 127–30; Van Ess 1981, 22–38.

127. The *Jāmiʿ al-taṣānīf-i Rashīdī*. See Kamola 2019, 112–13.

128. Sela makes a similar note regarding the vizier's history: see Sela 2013, 216. This also explains why Rashīd al-Dīn's earlier collection fared better than the collections of treatises he composed later in his career (after 1310). For example, *Explanation of Truths* is found in a single manuscript in Persian and one in Arabic. See Pfeiffer 2016, 67–71.

129. Van Ess 1981, 15n18 (for a fifteenth-century example).

130. For example, five copies in Persian of *Tawżīḥāt-i Rashīdī* and one of *Mabāḥis-i sulṭāniyya* are listed in the inventory of Bayezid II's palace library. See Fleischer and Şahin 2019, 1: 573–74. See, further, the epilogue.

131. These include verses by Ḥumām-i Tabrīzī, Niẓāmī, Shihāb al-Dīn Suhawardī, the mystic Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Dāya, Aṭṭār, Firdawsī, and more (for example, Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 51–54, 59, 71, 101). On the inclusion of poetry in the *Compendium,* see further Mirahmadi 2021, 1–14.

132. Hāshim Rajabzāda, "Editor's introduction" in Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 42. See, for example, his treatise on "Explaining the States of God's Grace" (Rashīd al-Dīn 1976–77, 140–66). In one treatise, the vizier discusses the notion that the "perfect souls" experience time differently and can think and write at an extremely fast pace. They experience a certain form of "time-warp" (Pfeiffer 2019, 25). He might be alluding to his own capacity to compose swiftly.

133. Rashīd al-Dīn's theological-philosophical perspective also dominated his historical writing.

134. For example, see Rashīd al-Dīn 1993, 2:27.

135. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015, 100–108. *Book of the Sultan* (*Kitāb-i sulṭāniyya*), has several additional titles: *Epistle of the Sultan on the Debates on Prophethood* (*al-Risāla al-sulṭāniyya fī al-mabāḥith al-nabawiyya*) or *on the Prophetic Ranks* (*fī al-marātib al-nabawiyya*), and *Debates of the Sultan* (*al-Mabāḥith al-sulṭāniyya*). See Van Ess 1981, 17–19.

136. Öljeitü's involvement in Rashid al-Din's work anticipates later works dedicated to the interreligious debates and intellectual exchanges at early modern rulers' courts, specifically *Assemblies of Jahangir* (*Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*), which recorded the nightly exchanges and disputations at the Mughal emperor Jahangir's (1569–1627) court. Jahangir insisted on recording these sessions and was likewise periodically shown the text, ordering corrections and additions. See Alam and Subrahmanyam 2009, 487–88.

137. He sponsored the construction of a Buddhist temple in Malot in Kashmir. See Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 198; Sperling 1990, 145–57; Elverskog 2010, 149; Prazniak 2014, 655.

138. The toyins "by magical means, make horses, camels, the dead and felt pictures speak . . . They deceived [Hülegü] and said that they would make him immortal; and he lived, moved, and mounted [his horse] according to their words. . . ." See Gandzakets'i 1986; Elverskog 2010, 139–40; Grupper 2004, 28–34. Christian European authors likewise associated Buddhism with the performance of magic and tricks. See Scott 1988, 165–84.

139. Prazniak 2014, 662–66.

140. Ibid., 661–66; Grupper 2004, 5–77; Azad 2011.

141. Prazniak 2014, 661.

142. Ibid., 655, 664; Elverskog 2010, 149. Unlike Prazniak, I find no evidence of a "strong" Kashmirian presence in the Ilkhanate.

143.   Sajastānī 1987, 70. As Deweese notes, however, Paranda's disparaging comments on his fellow Buddhists at the court suspiciously resemble Simnānī's own criticism of the Buddhist monks. See DeWeese 2014, 63.

144.   Prazniak 2019, 176, 185.

145.   Urban 2001, 805.

146.   Sagaster 2007, 386; Weirong 2011, 541; George-Tvrtkovic 2012, 192, 198; Scott 1988, 179.

147.   Arghun took an elixir made from sulfur and quicksilver for about eight months. It was provided to him by an Indian *bakhshī*. Arghun then entered a forty-day retreat and subsequently became ill. He regained his health but had a relapse that led to his death. See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1179; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:57 (see also discussion in Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 200); al-Manṣūrī 1998, 284–85; al-Nuwayrī 1985, 27:273–74.

148.   Tibetan Buddhists had a significant role as conduits of medical knowledge between the eastern and western ends of the Mongol Empire. See Yoeli-Tlalim 2021, 116–20.

149.   DeWeese 2014, 48–53; Simnānī 1988, 185–88.

150.   Paranda *bakhshī,* for example, seems to have prevented Arghun from executing Simnānī's uncle. See DeWeese, 2014, 63. In another example, according to Vaṣṣāf, Arghun's Jewish minister Saʿd al-Dawla succeeded in convincing a *bakhshī* to present to the Ilkhan an accusation against Saʿd al-Dawla's Mongol adversary amir Toghan, for which the latter received seventeen lashes. His name appears as G/K-R-B-N-D. See Vaṣṣāf 1959–60, 239.

151.   DeWeese 2014, 50.

152.   Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1335; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:664.

153.   Or Bāra/uq. He was appointed to teach the prince the Mongolian and Uyghur scripts along with Buddhist sciences and traditions. See Allsen 2001, 33; Rashīd al-Dīn 1940, 8; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i mubārak-i Ghazanī,* Bibliothèque Nationale Supplément person 1113, fol. 656r.

154.   Brack 2016, 38–81. Whereas I suggest we view these events through the prism of dynastic seniority within the Hülegüid line (and thus the Arghunid line's disadvantage), Michael Hope has argued that they were part of a broader struggle between the Chinggisid bloodline (the "patrimonial faction") and the "collegial faction" consisting of the *noyat,* the senior commanders. See Hope 2016.

155.   Brack 2016, 55–60.

156.   Tibet was divided into several fiefs among the descendants of Tolui, Chinggis Khan's youngest son, and each son developed patronage relationships with different Tibetan schools. See Sagaster 2007, 387. The patronage of Buddhist schools in "Western Tibet, including Ladakh, became a battleground for inter-*ulus* Mongol competition" (Prazniak 2019, 136–37). Grupper, furthermore, identifies Hülegü's Buddhist "leniencies" and building projects as part of a larger pattern of patronage of the Toluid imperial circles. See Grupper 2004.

157.   Prazniak 2014, 680.

158.   Melville 1990b, 159–77.

159.   Amitai-Preiss 1996a.

160.   According to Rashīd al-Dīn, most of the monks chose to convert to Islam; yet, since their conversion was insincere, Ghazan sent the monks back to their homelands. See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1357; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:676. The same measures were implemented against Christian communities. See Rassi 2022, 78–79.

161. Melville 1990b, 170–71. The Christian sources unanimously blame the Mongol amir Nawruz. See Bar Hebraeus 1932, 506–8; Orbélian 1864, 261–62; Foltz 1999, 62–65; Dashdon-dog 2011, 197.

162. Prazniak 2014, 667.

163. Ibid., 650–51.

CHAPTER 1. INDIAN PROPHET OR FATHER OF ARABIAN PAGANISM?

1. Prazniak 2014, 655–57. For the second half of the eighth century as the "Indian half-century of Islam" and the short-lived turn toward "Sanskritic Islam," see Beckwith 2009, 153–54, 413n76; Elverskog 2010, 82. On the patronage and assimilation of the "Asian sciences"—medicine, astronomy, and astrology—see van Bladel 2011; Shefer-Mossensohn and Abou Hershkovitz 2013, 274–99.

2. Economic reasons and the transition from Silk Road land trade to maritime trade played a significant role in this rift. See Elverskog 2010, 82ff; Sen 2003.

3. Elverskog 2010, 87; Waardenburg 1999, 33.

4. His access to Buddhists was limited even during his travels in India and his main source of information on Buddhism were the Hindus. Thus, he states, "I have never found a Buddhist book, and never knew a Buddhist from whom I might have learned their theories on this subject" (Elverskog 2010, 84). See also Sachau 1976, 101–2; Crone 2016, 224; Gimaret 1969, 295, 299.

5. Canby 1993, 299–310.

6. For example, Jahn 1965; Elverskog 2010, 145–74; Akasoy 2013; Yoeli-Tlalim 2013.

7. Jahn 1965, xlviii; Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 164. For the use of crystal lamps in the Islamic world, see Shalem 1994, 1–11. For illustrations of this scene, see Canby 1993, 304–5.

8. Elverskog 2010, 151.

9. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 282–83.

10. For Rashīd al-Dīn's reliance on Bīrūnī in the first five sections (the history, geography, and chronology of India), see Jahn 1965, xiii, xciii; Ogura 2019.

11. Jahn considers the Buddhist part of the *History of India* as a collaborative effort of Rashīd al-Dīn and Kamālashrī. See Jahn 1965, xxxiii; Allsen 2001, 84.

12. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 2.

13. The combined sixteenth-century manuscript of Qāshānī's *Zubdat al-tawārīkh* and *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* (dated to 989/1581), which is housed at the Tehran University library (*kitābkhāna-yi markazī-yi dānishgāh-i Tahrān* Ms. 9067), is the most complete manuscript of the two histories, and seems to be the only copy of Qāshānī's that includes the chapter on India. See Qāshānī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh,* Tehran University, Ms. 9067, fols. 329r–354v; Otsuka, 2018, 126. The opening lines are missing and the chapter is also cut off in the middle of the section on Maitreya.

14. There are additional indications that the "original" *History of India* was composed during Ghazan's reign (which confirms Qāshānī's "order" of composition) in the Persian version of Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium.* For example, in the discussion of Bīrūnī's account of the Indic calendars, the *Compendium* abstains from referring to the Ilkhan Ghazan as deceased, which is corrected in the Arabic translation of the work, where he is described as

"the *late* just Sultan Ghazan Maḥmūd." See Royal Asiatic Society A 27 (dated 714/1314–15), f. 2059v; Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 5. This section, however, is missing from Qāshānī's manuscript.

15. He states that little was known about the histories of lands far from Iran (*zamīn-i īrān*) until the arrival of Hülegü Khan and his idol-worshipping household (*urūq*). "They had in their service physicians, monks, *toyins* [*bakhshīyān va-tūʾiyān*], and Brahmanas from Turkistan, Hindustan, Kashmir, Tibet, and the Uyghurs." Yet the Muslims continued to disregard the Buddhists' creeds and knowledge. Thus, despite their arrival in Iran with Hülegü's forces, it was only during the reign of his great grandson, the Muslim convert Ghazan, who was also educated and knowledgeable in the Buddhist traditions and sciences, that Kamālashrī *bakhshī* and his followers (*nökerān*) were chosen by royal decree to write the *History of India*. See Qāshānī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh,* fol. 339r. Note that Qāshānī does not identify Kamālashrī as Kashmiri, but as having an Indian background. Qāshānī's account of the circumstances leading to the composition of the *History of India* further resembles the description of the composition of the *Compendium's* chapter on the *History of China.* There, too, Rashīd al-Dīn relied on Qāshānī's earlier version. According to Qāshānī, Ghazan desired that a succinct historical account of China and their kings be added to the (Qāshānī's) *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh.* See Jahn 1971, 23 (mss 393r/Tafel 4); Franke 1951, 22.

16. These include the description of heaven in section 8, which is a translation of the Vasishta Sutra, and the exchange between the Buddha and the angel in section 16, which is taken from the Devata Sutra. See Schopen 1982, 226–27.

17. The Chinese "influences" are mainly expressed through the list of titles of Buddhist works and a summary of their contents, which appear in manuscripts of the Arabic translation. See Jahn 1965, lxxi–lxxvi.

18. For example, it notes that Lokesvara (*lūkishvar*) is called *in Chinese* Guanyin (*kūnashī*). See Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 129.

19. Elverskog 2010, 158; Elverskog 2006–8, 99.

20. Elverskog 2010, 159. According to Jahn, the Buddhist works listed in the chapter by title might have been available "in Uyghur and even perhaps in Mongolian translation." The Buddha's designation as Burkhān is a possible indication of this (see Jahn 1965, lxxvi). In Qāshānī's *Zubdat al-tawārīkh* (fol. 339v), Shakyamuni is given the title *tarkhān,* a high-ranking Inner Asian title that usually afforded tax exemptions and was granted to religious dignitaries; this, however, might be a scribal error for Burkhān. Simnānī likewise refers to the Buddha as Burkhān suggesting that his "knowledge of Buddhist terminology might reflect a prevalence of Uyghur monks" (DeWeese 2014, 72).

21. There is little evidence for Vaziri's suggestion that the chapter evinces mainly Tibetan-Nepali influences. Cf. Vaziri 2012, 116.

22. For example, the doxography of Shakyamuni's followers implies that the text advocates for the superiority of Tantric Vajrayana school over Nikaya and Mahayana schools. See Elverskog 2010, 150, 299n107.

23. In the title of one of the Buddhist works listed. See ibid., 206.

24. According to the *History of India,* a work titled *Qashūrdī* was compiled after the Buddha's death to record his wise words. The Kanjur (bka' 'guyr, literally: "collected word") was part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon that included statements ascribed to the Buddha. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 165. According to Jahn, this supports the suggestion that at least a partial Mongolian translation of the Kanjur was available. See Jahn 1965, lxxvi. The compo-

sition of the Kanjur, however, is roughly dated to the turn of the fourteenth century, making this reference the earliest external indication of the Kanjur's collection. See Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 206; Elverskog 2010, 161–62.

25. Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 207–8.

26. The most compelling candidate thus far has been one Kamālashrī Paṇḍita of Kashmir. His name appears in a Yuan Chinese inscription from Wutaishn, which is, however, dated after 1333, making his "candidacy" unlikely. See Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 202–4; Matusi 2008, 163. We should also consider the possibility that Kamālashrī predated the composition of the *History of India.*

27. Short for Vimalashribhadra; he was a Buddhist translator (Sanskrit to Tibetan) with links to the Sakya pandits. He was the sole Indian scholar among the twenty-nine Buddhist specialists from a Chinese, Uyghur, or Tibetan background listed as involved in the comparative catalog of Chinese and Tibetan translations of Buddhist scriptures (the *Chih-yuan/ Zhiyuan*). Completed between 1285 and 1287 at a Buddhist temple in Dadu, the catalogue was imperially sponsored. The only detail the catalogue provides on Vimalashri is that he mastered the five Buddhist teachings (grammar, mathematics, medicine, logic, and philosophy). See Franke 1994, 286–98; Van der Kuijp 2014, 162–63.

28. Prazniak 2014, 654.

29. Flood 2009, 249, 182.

30. Akasoy 2013, 173–90; Elverskog 2010, 154; Jahn 1965, xliv. For example, the account uses terms such as *mukāshafāt, maʿrifa, ʿulūm yaqīniyya, khalwa,* and *mujāhada.* See Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 111; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh,* Ms. Royal Asiatic Society A. 27, 2073v (Arabic).

31. Elverskog 2010, 154; Jahn 1965, xxxiv.

32. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 118–19.

33. Especially the figure of Būdhāsaf. See Gimaret 1969, 279–87. According to Hayes, the Buddha was aligned with "the larger pattern of accepting the sage-philosopher-ascetic figure as a legitimate model for the thought and actions of Muslims, in spite of the pagan context from which they spring" (Hayes 2017, 93).

34. Some authors conflated India with Sarandib. Furthermore, according to the chapter, a mine of red rubies can be found there and his teeth are kept in Sarandib by the Buddhists. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 111–12.

35. The Arab geographer Idrīsī (d. 1165) also reports that Adam's footmark is imprinted in Sarandib. The site in modern-day Sri Lanka is well known today as Adam's Peak. The Buddhists call it Sri Pada and consider it is the site of the Buddha's footprint. The Hindus consider the footprint to be Vishnu's or Shiva's. See Ricci 2019, 125–33; Bosworth 2012, 39.

36. Elverskog 2010, 155–56.

37. Friedmann 1975, 219.

38. Hayes 2017, 87–88.

39. Dodge 1970, 831, 824; Lawrence 1976, 103, 106.

40. Ibid*.,* 43, 113. As Elverskog notes, however, the comparison to Khizr is meaningful from a Muslim perspective, but it does not rectify Shahrastānī's more general, dismissive approach to Buddhism. He considers the Buddha's teachings as another false tradition in his taxonomy of excluded religious heresies. See Elverskog 2010, 88–89.

41. Sections 11 to 18.

42. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 101–5 (Persian); Akasoy 2013, 191–94 (Arabic and translation).

43. *Ṭāʾifa* and *madhhab* are used interchangeably in the Arabic and Persian versions.

44. "They believe that paradise and hell do not exist. There will be no compensation or requital for good and evil. If you want to, commit evil acts, and if you want to, commit good acts. No human will remain . . . And [they also believe] that there is no day of judgment . . ." (Ibid., 194).

45. Ogura 2019; Gerschheimer 2000, 173–89.

46. Flood 2003, 4.

47. Hayes 2017, 109–10

48. The trope of six previous prophets appears once again in the Buddhist section: the Buddha casts the bowl he ate from into the Ganges; the bowl floats and moves against the current, reaching the river's source within an hour. There it rests on the six other bowls of the prophets who have preceded Shakyamuni. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 117; Jahn 1965, xliii.

49. In the Arabic version: "in every age." See Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 105; Akasoy 2013, 191 (Arabic), 195–96 (translation).

50. Elverskog 2010, 75–6.

51. ʾPhags-pa 1983, 43–4.

52. Elverskog 2010, 156. Compare to the *vedas* as "revelation": Bīrūnī, for example, assigns to the figure of the Indian "prophet"/god Brahma and other Indian "progenitors" the reception and transmission of a scripture "sent down" by God and divinely inspired knowledge (Hayes 2017, 106–7); and the eighteenth-century Mughal Naqshbandi Sufi Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān (d. 1781) identifies the Indic-Hindu "scripture" as the "bed" (*vedas*), delivered by the angel Brahama (Tareen 2017, 452).

53. In the "Book of China" (*Khaṭāynāma,* composed in 1516) by the sixteenth-century Transoxianan merchant Sayyid ʿAlī Akbar Khaṭāʾī, the Buddha is completely transformed into a prophet (*payghāmbar*) who arrives to warn and summon the people to worship the one true God (*khudā*); and, after being challenged by the masses, he performs miracles. Subsequently, the masses convert to the Buddha's religion "and accept his [holy] book" (!), obeying his law (*sharīʿa*). Yet, Khaṭāyī notes, during the four thousand years that passed, his religion was changed and corrupted. Some of his adherents became idol worshipers and others worshipped the fire, sun, moon, and the calf "from the Jews and the Christians." See Khaṭāʾī 1993, 48–49; Hemmat 2010, 434–48.

54. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 2.

55. In his letter to Pope Nicholas IV, Arghun refers to the "nom of the Messiah," the Christian faith. *Nom* did not refer to specific religions in the same abstract sense defined by religious truth claims, but to "particular ways of life" and practices of the clergy or monastic class. It therefore evaded the distinction between religious and ethnic (or communal) identifications, and was used more as a feature defining the occupational category of clergy or ritual expertise. See Atwood 2022, 803–6; Elverskog 2010, 295n53. It might be for this reason that some Muslims considered the Mongols to use "nom" as a reference to a form of scripture that prescribed rituals, rules, and "ways of life" required to maintain communal well-being.

56. Juvaynī 1912–37, 1:44; Juvaynī 1958, 1:60. Bar Hebraeus too describes the Buddhist *nom* as consisting of "pagan proverbs which resemble those which St Gregory Theologus" and "good laws, as for example an admonition against oppression, and the infliction of

injuries, and we must not return evil for evil but good, and a man does not kill any small animal such as a louse or a gnat" (Bar Hebraeus 1932, 356).

57. DeWeese 2014, 68; Sajastānī 1987, 84.

58. Jahn 1965, lxx; Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 159. Shakyamuni makes a similar statement in his short biography in the *Compendium*'s *History of China*. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 154. See also Calzolaio and Fiaschetti 2019, 24.

59. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015b, 220–21.

60. Freidmann 2003, 26.

61. The chapter on the *History of China* likewise promotes a Buddhist perspective showing a dismissive stance toward the rival founder figures of Laozi and especially Confucius. See Calzolaio and Fiaschetti 2019.

62. Jahn 1965, xciv; Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 75ff. For example, noting that Hariscadra reached "the same stage as the metempsychosis of Shakyamuni" (Jahn 1965, xxii). See also Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 93.

63. Jahn 1965, xcvii; Akasoy 2013, 193–94 (translation), 190–91 (Arabic), 182–84 (discussion).

64. MacDonald and Madelung 2012. Compare with Shahrastānī's identification of the Indian deities as "spiritual beings [*rūḥāniyāt*] or angels [*malak rūḥānī*]." Shahrastānī also seems to acknowledge that they serve a prophetic capacity. See Lawrence 1976, 47–49 (translation), 146–48 (analysis).

65. My emphasis. An alternative translation may be "they [their Indian devotees] claim them to be god."

66. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 107; for the Arabic, see Royal Asiatic Society A 27, 2072v.

67. Quoted in Lopez 2013, 36.

68. Ibid., 35.

69. Ibid., 36.

70. In Theravada Buddhism, moreover, "the sphere of metapersons" is sidelined altogether by making neither the metapersons' eradication nor their help necessary to reach enlightenment. See Strathern 2019b, 71, 75–77.

71. Josephson 2012, 27; Duara 2015, 125, 148, 222 ("hierarchical encompassment" of "dialogical transcendence"); Amar 2012, 155–85; here 180.

72. Akasoy 2013, 182–83.

73. Stewart 2001, 281; Flood 2009, 178–79; Cappelletti 2019, 162–63, 166–67; Truschke 2016a, 115–17.

74. Jahn 1965, xxxviii–xl.

75. Quoted by Akasoy 2013, 187; Ms. Royal Asiatic Society A 27, fol. 2077r (Arabic); Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 163.

76. Akasoy 2019, 7. It might also be connected to the way in which the figure of Būdhāsaf, which was associated with the Buddha, was incorporated into a wider "discussion of the origins of idolatry which had begun well before the rise of the Sasanians, let alone the coming of Islam," specifically in eastern Iran and Iraq. Bīrūnī stated that before the appearance of Zoroaster, the Summniya (or Shamaniyya), which seems to represent some form of early paganism that was also associated with Buddhism, dominated Khurasan, Fars, Iraq, and Mosul to the borders of Syria. See Crone 2016, 220, 224.

77. Friedmann 1975, 214.

78. Akasoy 2012, 207–13.

79. Friedmann 1975, 215.

80. Tareen 2017, 449–453.

81. DeWeese 2014, 68ff. Simnānī 1983, 482–83 (Arabic text). Compare with the account in Simnānī 1988, 36–37.

82. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:29; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:16; Kamola 2015, 555–77. In his conversion account, Ghazan bemoans the senselessness of idol worshipping. See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:619–20.

83. Mustawfī Qazvīnī 1999, 2, 1323; Vaṣṣāf 1959–60, 242; Brack 2019a, 385.

84. Pines 1994, 182–203; Gimaret 1969, 300–301; Xiuyuan 2018, 944–73.

85. ʿSramana. The title of *sumaniyya* (or *samaniyya/shamaniyya*) is not always associated with the Buddhists, but like the *barāhima* and other terms, it could also function as a generic name for the Indian religions or a general reference for an ancient tradition of paganism. See Stroumsa 1999, 159; Crone 2016, 212.

86. Furthermore, the *sumaniyya* sect became identified with another group, the *muʿaṭṭila,* deniers of rational deduction and the agnostics. See Waardenburg 1993, 33–34; Gimaret 1969, 299–303; Monnot 2012; Crone 2016, 217. Tenth-century Muslim authors identified the sumaniyya as an early sect, followers of the prophet Būdhāsaf, who appeared in India and was known as one of the original teachers of asceticism, although, in other examples, Būdhāsaf appears a as reformer and re-instituter of an earlier form of paganism. His doctrine is also reported to have spread to China as well as to eastern Iran. See Crone 2016, 212–16.

87. Through the debates held with east Iranian Buddhists. See Crone 2016, 218. This view of the Buddhists as irrational might reflect the Buddhist theory on the criteria of knowledge and principles of Buddhist logic, according to which "perception is the ultimate source of knowledge." Buddhists would argue about the sensory sources of the Muslim claim of the existence of God, suggesting that the existence of a non-corporeal God cannot be inferred from the sensible experience and is thus disputed. See Xiuyuan 2018, 945–47.

88. Waardenburg 1993, 33–34.

89. Gimaret 1969, 304–6.

90. Calverley and Pollock 2002, 137–46.

91. Dessein 2019, 183–84.

92. Beckwith 2011, 163–75; Beckwith 2012. For a recent reevaluation of Beckwith's thesis, see Dessein 2019.

93. For example, the 1258 Buddhist-Daoist debate in Qaraqorum. The momentous debate marked not only another stage in the gradual ascendancy of Buddhism, but also informed a shift in the Buddhist representation at the Mongol centers of power, from Chinese to Tibetan-Tantric dominance. See Atwood 2004a, 48–49; Sagaster 2007, 389–91.

94. Kedar 1999, 170–71; Jackson 1990, 233.

95. Prazniak 2014, 676. Rubruck's adversary may have been the Buddhist Zhanglao Fuyü (1203–75), who had initially visited Qaraqorum to establish a branch of the Shaolin order but was retained by the Qaʾan at the court and received control over the Buddhist monks in Qaraqorum. See Young 1989, 113; Sagaster 2007, 383, 389.

96. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 282–83. The *sumaniyya* supposedly believed in the eternity of the world and thus related to the *dahriyya*. See Gimaret 1969, 294–95; Lawrence 1976, 113.

97. Kamālashrī explains that "from the beginning of the Badrakalpa flood, seven individuals [enlightened Buddhas] have arrived, and the meaning of Badra is good and the meaning of kalpa [4,320,000,000 years] is deluge, and therefore it is called the good deluge [Badrakalpa]. From the beginning of each deluge/epoch to the beginning of another, one prophet has arrived, and during this deluge/aeon, a thousand prophets will arrive" (Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 105; Ogura 2019). Riccoldo also comments that the Buddhists claim that Noah's flood never came to India. See George-Tvrtkovic 2012, 192.

98. For example, see Schmidtke 1999.

99. Al-Murtaḍā, 1898–99, 31–32; Elverskog 2010, 56–58.

100. Gimaret observes how similar accounts of intellectual debates between a Muslim *mutakallim* and a Buddhist pandit were interpreted differently by authors according to their own view of rational theology. Opponents of kalam such as the Ḥanbalis "read" such discussions as leading to heretical thinking. See Gimaret 1969, 301.

CHAPTER 2. PERFECT SOULS, IMPERFECT BODIES

1. *Samīnk sambud.* Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 151–52; Jahn 1965, lxii. Schopen notes that this section is a translation of the Sanskrit *Devata Sutra,* a "dialogue in riddle form" between a celestial being and the Buddha. See Schopen 1982, 225–27.

2. Elverskog 2010, 152. Sakaki links the description of the different Buddhist hells in the chapter to the Pali *Aggañña-sutta.* See Ogura (2019), who refers to a Japanese article by Kazuyo Sakaki: "Chūsei Islam bunken ni okeru Bukkyō no zen'aku kan: Rashīd al-Dīn no *Shūshi* ni miru rokudō rinne," *Journal of the Nippon Buddhist Research Association* 65 (2000): 11–22.

3. The six forms of metempsychosis in the chapter (as in earlier Islamic discussions on the topic) are *naskh* (soul transfers into a human body), *maskh* (into animal form), *raskh* (into vegetation), and *faskh* (into mineral). See Jahn 1965, xlix–lxv; Ogura 2019.

4. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 141, 144–45.

5. *Dahrīyān.* The *dahrī* (externalist) thinkers in the early Islamic period are credited with the belief in a cosmology without God; yet they are often also seen as holding the belief in some form of reincarnation. The *dahrīs* are coupled in the sources with the *zindīqs.* According to Jāḥiẓ, the "pure *dahrī*" did not believe in the creator, resurrection, or any life after death. The *dahrīs* likely owed their name to Qur'an 45:24. Muslim heresiographers argue that they are "rationalists of the reductionist type." From the tenth century onwards, the main "debate" with the *dahrīs* was concerned with the existence of the afterlife. See Crone 2012a; Crone 2012b, 247–49. On the *dahriyya*'s relationship, even conflation, with Indic religions and specifically Buddhism, see Gimaret 1969, 295–96.

6. This treatise appears first in *Key to the Commentaries*. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 211–38.

7. This notion of metempsychosis as a common feature of all religions is also echoed in Shahrastānī. See Lawrence 1976, 46.

8. Rashīd al-Dīn 2016, 165.

9. The author of the preface to the reprinted Tangut edition of the Buddhist "Golden Light Sutra" produced in 1247 under Mongol patronage, stated his hope that, owing to the Mongols, "this sutra should be spread abroad as medicine to heal and restore the faith" (Dunnell 1992, 105–6).

10. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015b, 2:556.

11. Pfeiffer 2019, 29–30, 38. Compare with the methods of Muslim authors to maintain distance from the Indic-Hindu traditions that they were translating and assimilating. See Truschke 2016a, 138–39.

12. From this perspective, the vizier's refutations of reincarnation share Avicenna's objection to metempsychosis on the grounds that metempsychosis does not acknowledge the soul's relationship with a specific body. In his dialectical debate regarding the rational soul, Avicenna presents a compromise between two extremes. He refutes the notion of the soul's full dependence on a body, proving the souls' immateriality and immortality, on the one hand; on the other hand, he disputes the idea that the soul's association with a body is solely contingent, arguing for the soul's requirement of the body for individuation. See Adamson 2004, 64, 72.

13. *Nuqṣān.* This variant appears in the same, slightly altered passage in the treatise found in Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 167.

14. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 211. The Syriac author Bar Hebraeus writes as follows: the Buddhists believe that "the spirits of just men, and righteous men, and well-doers when they die migrate to the bodies of kings and nobles, and the souls of evil and wicked men into the bodies of evil-doers who are tortured, and beaten and killed, and also into the bodies of irrational creatures, and reptiles and birds of prey" (Bar Hebraeus 1932, 355–56).

15. Shihadeh 2006, 110.

16. Shihadeh 2012, 433–77.

17. Shihadeh 2005, 173–74; Shihadeh 2006, 110–17, 123–25.

18. "We have shown that perfection and imperfection appear in various degrees and disparate levels among people. Therefore, as we are able to see individuals, who have reached great proximity to cattle and beasts in imperfection, stupidity and heedlessness, similarly, on the side of perfection, there will have to exist perfect and virtuous individuals. Necessarily, there will exist among them an individual who is the most perfect and virtuous of them" (Shihadeh 2006, 138).

19. *Takmīl al-nāqiṣīn.* Ibid., 125–26, 135. According to Avicenna, the prophetic faculty has an exceptionally powerful aptitude for intuition (*ḥads*) that allows it to achieve theoretical knowledge. People differ in their capacity to attain knowledge. Rāzī supports Avicenna's epistemological theory of intuition. See Jaffer 2015, 139–40.

20. Shihadeh 2005, 174. As Shihade explains, through this model of prophetic (intellectual and moral) perfection, Rāzī transforms the very goal of Islamic theology: it is "no longer viewed as being in the service of scriptural creed, by providing theoretical support"; rather, the revealed scripture itself instead "becomes primarily a means to the ultimate goal of intellectual perfection, rather than to communicating theological knowledge to men."

21. Elverskog identifies the three categories as the three Buddhist schools: Nikaya, Mahayana, and Tantric Buddhism. The Tantric Buddhists (the *samyaksambuddha,* the "perfectly enlightened Buddha"), accordingly, are viewed as the superior group, possibly indicating the text's Tantric (Tibetan?) inclination. In another passage in the *History of India,* the Tantric practitioners are identified as the *samyaksambuddha* ("the people of Tibet and Tangut, who share the same religious community [*milla*], are all in the school of *samyaksambuddha* . . ."). See Elverskog 2010, 150–51, 299n107; Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 204–5; Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 163.

22. Text and translation in Akasoy 2013, 190–96. This division echoes a statement in Pakpa's textbook composed for the Yuan prince Jin-gim (above): see ʾPhags-pa 1983, 43–44.

23. On this division, see, further, chapter 4.

24. See the subchapter on the "distinguishing marks and characteristics of the perfect man [*al-insān al-kāmil*] according to the words of the Buddhist monks [*bakhshīs*]" where he enumerates thirty-two signs of the "perfect man" and prophet that we were all found in Shakyamuni. See Jahn 1965, xli.

25. Elverskog 2010, 161.

26. According to the text, it is the same as Lokesvara (*lūkishvar*) in Chinese.

27. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 129. According to Qāshānī (*Zubdat al-tawārīkh,* Tehran University, Ms. 9067, fol. 351r), this being is both spiritual and physical. Chinese and Central Asian artistic representations of the eleven-headed salvific Bodhisattva Guanyin might have inspired the pictorial representation of the polycephalous angel of prayer in the Timurid *Miʿrajnama*. Gruber further notes that the parallel roles of both figures as "expedient devices" of salvation, deliverance, and compassion materialized through "the cross-religious pictorial device of manifold limbs or heads" (Gruber 2008, 317–19).

28. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 282.

29. Bīrūnī defined the belief in reincarnation as the distinguishing feature, and thus as a unifying category, of the Indian religions as a whole ("the shibboleth of the Hindu religion"). Indian metempsychosis was comparable to the Muslim proclamation of *tawḥīd* and to the trinity in Christianity. Yet, as Paul Walker and others have observed, while Bīrūnī "presents a detailed account of Hindu beliefs about metempsychosis, he also quite explicitly assigns it to the ancient Greeks, particularly to Plato" (Walker 1991, 221).

30. Kozah 2016, 192. On accusations of heresy related to the belief in reincarnation, see Walker 1991, 219–38; Schmidtke 1999, 237–54. On the range of Muslim reincarnationists, see Khalil 2017, 735–54.

31. Walker 1991.

32. Writing under the Ilkhans, the Syriac Maphrian Bar Hebraeus, too, compared the Buddhist belief in reincarnation to Plato's arguments. See Bar Hebraeus 1932, 355–56.

33. He does not establish Buddhism as "an example of heresy within their larger project of legitimating their own theological interpretation" (Elverskog 2010, 70–71).

34. And thus the appellation (*ism*) human (*insān*) will not be assigned to it. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 213.

35. Ibid.

36. He quotes the Qurʾanic verse 38:72—"When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit"—claiming that it too proves this. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 214.

37. Ibid*.,* 215.

38. See Rāzī's refutation of metempsychosis (*ibṭāl tanāsukh*) in *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya.* The other arguments involve the impossibility of two souls existing in one body or the new soul negating the soul that originated in the body. See Attar 2014, 33; Rāzī 1924, 397–98.

39. Ceylan 1980, 242, and more generally, 241–45. Jacobsen Ben Hammed, on the other hand, argues that in *al-Maṭālib,* Rāzī focuses on the soul's nonbodily afterlife: the body's only function is to prepare the soul for its experience of being apart from it. See Jacobsen Ben Hammed 2018, 274.

40. He explains that "the nature of the world" is such that it is easier to make something from the things that were specifically prepared for it, rather than to make from them something entirely different. Other theologians, such as Taftāzānī, however, found the idea that the resurrected body would be recomposed from the exact same materials (and thus a literal interpretation of the Qur'an on the topic) problematic, though they also continued to oppose the Avicennan "spiritual resurrection." See Würtz 2017, 478–80.

41. Rāzī makes a similar argument: see İskenderoğlu 2005, 125.

42. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 217.

43. Rashīd al-Dīn further notes that a possible opposition to his argument is the argument that the body is never the same but changes throughout one's lifetime. His answer to this is that even when one's temperament might oscillate between excess and moderation, there is room for gradation (tafāvut) to occur without it exceeding the limit of the body's original composition. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 218–19. This too echoes Rāzī: "change and alteration occur only to the secondary parts of the body. Thus this permanent substance in man's body survives all circumstances and even death" (Ceylan 1980, 242).

44. For Avicenna, see Fancy 2013, 59; Jaffer 2003, 163–78. In addition to making arguments about the soul's quiddity as a "sensible, perceptible being," Rāzī also explains that "a body is always subject to change, whereas this is never the case with 'I' " (Janssens 2012, 564–65; Attar 2014, 63–64, 106–7).

45. Jacobsen Ben Hammed 2018, 271.

46. Adamson 2004, 70n 33.

47. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 216.

48. Ibid., 219.

49. The solubles or "what had been decomposed" (badala mā yataḥallalu).

50. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 219.

51. As Shihadeh asserts, Rāzī presses "in favor of a dualism of a physical body and a separate, rational and unphysical soul" (Shihadeh 2006, 116).

52. Jacobsen Ben Hammed 2018, 245–46.

53. For Avicenna, see Fancy 2013, 59. For Rāzī, see İskenderoğlu 2005, 130; Janssens 2012, 576–77.

54. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 220–21.

55. Furthermore, the vizier explains that when he speaks of the compatibility of the body to the soul, he refers to its compatibility to the soul in the body's original state/source (aṣl), to the compatibility of "each body part, at every moment, to each action" of the individual, and finally, to the weighing of sins and good deeds at the Final Judgment. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 221.

56. For ethical conditioning as a central tenant of reincarnation dogmas, see Obeyesekere 2002, 80.

57. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 222.

58. This accords with Muslim tradition. See Lange 2016, 146–50.

59. Rustomji 2009, 77–78.

60. The work is described as a dhayl, a continuation of Book of the Sultan. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 254.

61. Ibid., 254–55.

62. The same perfection cannot be achieved without a body. By divine ordinance, man's kind of perfection is a superior form of perfection over other, nonhuman types of perfection. Ibid., 255–56.

63. Ibid., 260.

64. Ibid., 261. For the soul's strengthening at the expense of the body and the superiority of the spiritual joys over the body's pleasures (and thus the need to abstain from earthly joys) in Rāzī's thought, see Jacobsen Ben Hammed 2018, 277–87.

65. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 269. Compare with Rāzī: "it is established that the attachment of the soul to the body is like the attachment of the lover to the beloved with a great and inspired love, with the result that this attachment is not severed as long as the body [*badn*] remains disposed for the soul to be attached to it. It is [further] like the attachment of the craftsman to the tools he needs for his different activities." This quotation is adapted from the translation of Attar Rifai 2014, 116. For the soul's longing for the body according to Rāzī, see Jacobsen Ben Hammed 2018, 291–92.

66. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 271–72.

67. Ibid.*,* 268.

68. On Rāzī's view on the purpose of the soul's attachment to matter, see Shihadeh 2006, 124–25.

69. Ibid., 117. Similarly, Rashīd al-Dīn writes that "the soul gains intellectual knowledge through the senses, and this intellectual knowledge . . . becomes the foundation for other [forms of] knowledge, and when it [the soul] departs from the body, it gains perfections based on the second foundation [the new knowledge attained] and these [perfections] are eternal . . . This second foundation becomes independent from the initial foundation" (Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 263–65, 269).

70. Ibid., 265.

71. Ibid., 275.

72. Jaffer 2015, 169, 191–99. Jaffer demonstrates that Rāzī adopted key elements of this doctrine from the ninth-century nonconformist Muʿtazili Abū Isḥāq Naẓẓam (d. 845), who himself was influenced by Stoic philosophy, and integrated these elements into his Sunnī *tafsīr*.

73. *Muṭlaqan kamāl-i insānī.* Rashīd al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-asʾila,* Ms. Ayasofya 2180, fols. 33–34, 37–40. On Muhammad being a prophetic entity prior to his actual birth, see Rubin 1975, 67–70 (for this tradition). Uri Rubin examines this tradition as part of a broader corpus of traditions that stressed the superiority of Muhammad's primordial substance. Here the tradition points to Muhammad's prophethood even while he was still a spermatic substance, "an integral prophetic entity before his birth."

74. He quotes the tradition according to which the Prophet said: "I was a prophet as soon as Adam was between water and clay" (Rashīd al-Dīn, 2015b, 2: 592). In the *Book of the Sultan,* the vizier discusses the same tradition, arguing that the people of transmigration (*ahl-i tanāsukh*) take the Prophet's words to mean that, "he must have been in a body for eternity, and now he is in another body." The vizier clarifies, however, that the Prophet said: "I was a prophet; he did not say: I was me; or another expression in which a body is derived." He argues that the Qurʾanic verse (18:110), "I am but a man like yourselves," shows that "revelation and prophethood have no attachment to a body since . . . the body of whoever

has revelation and prophethood does not have any additional advantage over other bodies." He explains that the Prophet's intention was to state that his prophethood was predetermined and awaited him until the moment of his mission, when he was granted perfect knowledge and intellect. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 209–10.

75. Halevi 2007, 234–37.

76. The afterlife replicated earthly social experiences and relations—from the continuation and augmentation of family dynamics to mimicking slave-owner relations. See Rustomji 2009, 78–79, 90; Lange 2016, 157–58.

77. Rashīd al-Dīn 1993, 8–9. Tyrants, on the other hand, would be severely punished in the afterlife. See Lange 2016, 159.

78. Halevi 2007, 197–225; Wensinck and Tritton 2012.

79. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 262.

80. Rustomji 2009.

81. Lange 2016, 150–51.

82. Boyle 1974; Jackson 2018, 312.

83. George-Tvrtkovic 2012, 191–92, 197; Dondiane 1967, 167–68.

CHAPTER 3. CONVERTING FORTUNE

1. Strathern 2019b, 37–41.

2. They could even be regarded as a form of steppe "political morality": see Munkh-Erdene 2018, 39–84.

3. Strathern 2019a, 50–51; Strathern 2019b, 155–218.

4. Aigle 2005, 147–48.

5. De Rachewiltz 1973, 168–69; de Rachewiltz 2007, 117–31; Baumann 2013.

6. Golden 1982, 37–77; Biran 2004, 340–41.

7. Allsen 2009, 1–8; Dankoff 1975, 72.

8. Allsen 2001, 201.

9. Allsen 2009. On the Chinese rendering of the Chinggisid fortune (*yun,* combining notions of fortune and predestination), see Robinson 2020, 261–62; Fiaschetti 2013–14, 81–83.

10. Elverskog 2006, 48–62.

11. DeWeese 1994, 46.

12. Brack 2019b, 611–29; Atwood 2004b, 253.

13. Moreover, Buddhism went a step further than monotheist systems. While the latter imagined the salvific goal as heaven, Buddhist cosmologies featured many heavens, but they, too, were meaningless sites of suffering in comparison to the achievement of nirvana.

14. Strathern 2019b, 50–53.

15. Elverskog 2010, 149; Prazniak 2014, 655.

16. Translation by Samten and Martin 2014–15, 313.

17. Ibid., 311–12.

18. "By force of the merit and aspirations of past lives, this royal line of Chinggis Khan has become ruler of the great earth, so that all beings have come to rely on them" (Ibid., 322).

19. Ibid., 310.

20. Reynolds 2005, 220–21. Yongjia considers the *Cakravartin* kings as cosmocrators, kings who (in contrast to the stranger kings) are "supra-social hosts." Yongjia 2011, 236–54.

The "parallelism" between the Buddha and the royal persona of *Cakravartin* extends to the entirety of the Buddha's biography and even to the Buddha's funeral rites, cremation, and the veneration of his remains. See Strong 2007, 32–59.

21. Walter 2009, 241.

22. Tambiah 1976, 39–53, 96–97; Apple 2010, 114; Yongjia 2011, 247.

23. Franke 1978, 52–55.

24. The author charts an uninterrupted line of Buddhist kings—from the first Buddhist king Mahāsamadi and his five Cakravartin children to the "Dharma king" Ashoka and, subsequently, to the pious kings in the Buddhist "expanse" - India , Tibet, and China. After this, however, a void in righteous Buddhist kingship appeared in Tibet as the kingdom was taken over by "petty kings and the dynasties," leading to the rise of the merit-blessed Chinggis Khan. The author thus implies that it is now the role of Yuan emperors (and their future successors) to support the Buddhist community and teachings, especially in Tibet. This expansive message also appears in the Chinese Buddhist history, the *Fozu lidai tongzai* (Complete records of the Buddhist patriarchs through history): see Franke 1978, 55.

25. 'Phags-pa 1983, 39–43.

26. In a letter to the Tibetan Fifth Karmapa, he described an apparition he saw which he interpreted to mean that he himself was the Cakravartin. Ching 2008, 342–43; Robinson 2008, 375; Robinson 2010, 65–66.

27. Elverskog 2006, 54–58.

28. Halkias 2013, 502–5; Bjerken 2005, 814; Walter 2009, 241.

29. Srathern 2019b, 217.

30. Ibid., 196

31. Ibid., 198.

32. Ibid., 205.

33. Melville 2013, 343–69; Melville 2001, 67–86; Melville 2002/3, 133–60.

34. Iranian conceptions of kingship served as an intermediary between Mongol and Islamic frameworks: Melville 2012, 191–92.

35. See, for example, the following verses in a poem praising Ghazan by the Ilkhanid court poet Banākatī (d. 1329–30), a client of Rashīd al-Dīn: "You are the Khān of the Khāns of the world and delivered to you is / The good fortune of this world and that of the next [*dawlat-i dunya va-dīn*] / With them you are an auspicious king." The poem describes Ghazan as a righteous and benevolent *pādshāh* (king) in accordance with the Iranian paradigm of just kingship. See Banākatī 1969, 465–66. On Royal Glory in Ilkhanid poetry, see Mirahmadi 2021.

36. Allsen 2009.

37. Arjomand 1984, 92–95. Arjomand refers to this model of bifurcated power as the "two powers" theory: see Arjomand 2003, 20–21; Arjomand 2013, 84–86.

38. Woods 1999, 6; Arjomand 2012, 9–10.

39. Strathern 2019b, 217.

40. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:181, 2:997, 2:1168–69; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1: 97, 3:488; 3:569.

41. These include the following: capacity (*istiʿdād*), happiness (*saʿāda*), fortunate horoscope (*ṭāliʿ-i masʿūd*), good fortune (*iqbāl*), turn of fortune (*dawla*), and divine favor (*tawfīq*). See Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 239. On happiness (*saʿāda*) in Muslim (Greek-modeled) philosophy, see Marlow 1997, 51, 54.

42. This idea also appears in Qāshānī's providential, prophetic conversion narrative of Ghazan, according to which Ghazan is predestined to be the king who will revive the Muslim community in accordance with "the impressions of the shining forehead [*jabīn-i mubīn*] of the prince" and who therefore must convert to Islam. See Brack 2018, 1155. On this theme, see also Auer 2012, 54.

43. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 246. Compare Yilmaz 2018, 160.

44. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 127–249. The first treatise is titled "On Good and Evil" and discusses questions such as why God created good and evil, the existence of absolute good and evil, and whether and how good doers and evildoers will be punished or rewarded in this world or the next. The second epistle focuses on "the rewards of good and bad actions." The third epistle deals with "the lengthening and shortening of one's lifespan" and "the hour of death and length of life, and on charity that can repel misfortune." The first half of this treatise explores how the length of life of animals and humans is determined, and compares different Islamic and non-Islamic (Jewish, for example) traditions concerning the prolonging of one's lifespan through charity and good deeds. According to the vizier, that the experiences of different communities agree on this principle indicates its veracity. The treatise further discusses the timing of one's bodily demise and the resurrection (Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 169–95). The choice of this topic is particularly intriguing considering the Ilkhanid rulers' interest in Buddhist (and Daoist) life-prolonging technologies and promises of immortality (Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 200). The fourth and final treatise before the refutation of metempsychosis is devoted to "the question of predestination" (*jabr va-qadr*).

45. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 106.

46. The account describes the utopian rule of the king Sankha in Ketumati (identified here as a city, and not the early paradise), suggesting that Sankha is indeed the same Cakravartin ruler as in the Buddhist tradition. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 154; Jahn 1965, lxv–lxvi. In the Buddhist tradition, king Sankha precedes the appearance of the Buddha Maitreya, and, hearing Maitreya's preaching, he relinquishes his throne. See Nattier 1988, 34; Jaini 1988, 57.

47. Prior to its role in the Vedic imperial ideology, the Cakravartin ideal possibly had roots in Near Eastern concepts of monarchy. See Strong 2007, 32–33.

48. Markiewicz 2019, 166–71.

49. Chann 2009.

50. Moin 2012; Balabanlilar 2012, 47–48.

51. Moin 2012; Mancini-Lander 2012, 244–67; Babayan 2002, 295–308 (Shah Ismāʿīl as Sahib Qiran); Fleischer 1986, 279–81 (especially note 16); Şahin 2013, 61–62.

52. Ruth Dunnell observes that "the Cakravartin model was more readily assimilable into the evolving Chinese imperial institution" (1996, 22).

53. Moin 2012, 45; Mancini-Lander 2012, 256.

54. Brack 2019b; Brack 2018.

55. Kamola 2019, 30. However, it is possible that this was meant to be "*ṣāḥib-i ṣāḥib qirān*," as in Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 1. Likewise, the Ilkhanid historian Qāḍī Bayḍāwī, too, was celebrated as Sahib Qiran in the introduction to his history: see Bayḍāwī 1935, 2.

56. For Anushiravan as the model of the just king and his famed reforms, see Darling 2013, 42–45. In the Siyāsatnāma, Anushiravan commands a chain with bells to be set outside his palace so those with unaddressed grievances could call on him directly. This symbol of royal

justice was employed by the Chuppanids, who fought over control of the eastern Islamic world in the decades following the Ilkhanate's collapse: see Broadbridge 2008, 158–59. Mustawfī Qazvīnī compares the prefect just reigns of Anushiravan and Ilkhan Ghazan: see Kamola 2019, 169. For other Ilkhanid examples that indicate Anushiravan was considered a paragon of royal justice in connection of the Sahib Qiran title, see Juvaynī 1912–37, 1: 190; Juvaynī 1958, 234.

57. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-asʾila.* Ms. Ayasofya 2180, fols. 33–44. Other sultans also used the example of Anushiravan to reinforce their position as philosopher-kings or as the intellectual equals of, if not the superiors to, the leading religious scholars of their realm. See, for example, the case of Mamluk Sultan Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1506–16): Mauder 2021, 755.

58. Mancini-Lander 2012, 258; Kennedy 1983, 29, 34.

59. "I was born in the age of the just king, Anushiravan." Bayḍāwī repeats the same tradition in his account of Anushiravan, and he recounts the story of Anushiravan's response to the miraculous, ominous signs that appeared at the night of the Prophet's birth: see Bayḍāwī 1935, 35. The same account is repeated by the vizier in Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 240–41.

60. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:222, 287–90, 2:1348, 1489; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:116, 141–42, 3:672, 736.

61. Jackson 2009, 114–15. While the concept of celestially predetermined selection of a specific individual suggests that this epithet is individual, the Sahib Qiran had been reappropriated in service of a model of successive, hereditary authority, for example, by the Timurids and the Mughals. The title, therefore, also encapsulated the Chinggisid oscillation between two modes of validating divine favor: the ritualized-genealogical and the personal-empirical. This division also fits the two categories of divinized kingship: the heroic and cosmic, for which see Strathern 2019b, 166–67.

62. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:287–90; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:141–42. Rashīd al-Dīn uses the term *shawka,* raw power, which is commonly associated with Turkic-Mongol military prowess. See Safi 2006, 112, 121.

63. According to Sahlins, stranger-king politics, which is a "synthesis between the complementary opposites," offers "a total structure of reproduction" in which the "acquisition of alterity is the condition of both fertility and identity" of the local society. See Sahlins 2009, 178; Caldwell and Henley 2009, 165; Yongjia 2011.

64. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:29; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:16.

65. Previous rulers, on the other hand, "had subdued most of the kingdoms of the world by dint of blood stained swords and fortress conquering maces, and even if it was granted to some [rulers] through inheritance it was inconceivable [that it would happen] without contest or dispute, particularly during the days of the Mongols when it is clear and patent to all how much strife and unrest had occurred in every revolution [*inqilāb*], how much blood has been spilled by glittering sword with the outbreak of sedition [*fitna*]." See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:5–6; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:5.

66. For a discussion of the frequent challenges of the reigns of Arghun and his offspring, see Brack 2016, chap. 1.

67. Fleischer 1986, 279–81.

68. Qāshānī 2005, 18–19. The invasion was led by Qaidu's son Sarban: see Biran 1997, 60. A similar account to Qāshānī's appears in Rashīd al-Dīn (Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 58–60). In fact, there are a few other examples that further connect the two works (Qāshānī 2005,

227ff.), which raises the question whether Rashīd al-Dīn had access to some of the early portions of Qāshānī's history of Öljeitü or, alternatively, whether Qāshānī used Rashīd al-Dīn's *Book of the Sultan* in his history.

69. Öljeitü in fact is not known for a major military accomplishment. See, for example, his unimpressive campaign against the Mamluk border town of al-Raḥba: Amitai-Preiss 1996b, 29–31.

70. The Ottoman vizier Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, for one, argued that the title of Sahib Qiran was reserved exclusively for historical world conquerors of great repute, granting the Ottoman sultans Selim I and Süleyman the lesser titles of "divinely aided" sovereigns. See Şahin 2013, 61–62; Subrahmanyam 1997, 756–58.

71. This was not correct, however. For the amir Horqadaq's failed attempt to enthrone prince Ala Fireng instead of Öljeitü, see Vaṣṣāf 1959–60, 461–62; Ayatī 1967, 271.

72. Collins 1996, 441–43; Collins 1998, 422.

73. Qubilai was similarly presented with advice about how to rule without defying the Buddhist moral "code." See Bira 1999, 246. See also Qubilai's conversation with the Chan master Haiyun, who told Qubilai that "Buddhism also had rules for worldly order," and therefore was more suitable than Daoism or Confucianism. See Franke 1978, 54–59.

74. Brack 2022.

75. DeWeese 2014, 48–53; Simnānī 1988, 185–88.

76. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 95–108. Rashīd al-Dīn states that the group came together for *tägishmishi* (an interview-audience) with the Ilkhan.

77. Their status is confirmed by the "authority verse" (Qurʾan 4:59), which ties together royal authorities and prophets. On this verse, see Afsaruddin 2006, 49–50. The verse was commonly used in the Ilkhanid correspondence with the Mamluks to justify their demand for Mamluk submission: see Broadbridge 2008, 73–80; Brack 2018, 1158–59.

78. For the childhood of prophets and saints, see Hagen 2002, 95–118.

79. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 54–55.

80. Doerfer 1963, 174.

81. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 57.

82. *Al-alqāb tunzalu min al-samāʾ.*

83. Further examples include the biblical prophets Yaʿqūb, who was renamed Isrāʾīl (since he was not defeated by the angel and thus was named in Hebrew, "the warrior with/ of God"), and Sulaymān (Qūḥaylat, that is, "the collector of knowledge/sciences"). Regarding Muhammad, he notes only that "he had many titles and names."

84. Thus, the vizier's view is aligned with de Rachewiltz's theory that the title "Chinggis Khan" is derived from *ching* in Mongolian (hard, strong), meaning, therefore, "mighty khan." See Biran 2007, 39.

85. There is a space left for this name in the manuscript; however, this clearly refers to Öljeitü's renaming Nicholas (after the Pope Nicholas IV) subsequent to his baptism in 1291. See Jackson 2018, 215.

86. According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, the prince was named first Kharbanda (mule/ass driver— per Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, "servant of the ass") because "the Tatars name a new-born child after the first person to enter the house after its birth; when the sultan was born the first person to enter was a mule-driver, whom they call *kharbandah,* so he was given this name." Later, "out of religious zeal," he changed his name to Khudābanda, which means God's servant. See Ibn

Baṭṭūṭa 2005, 2:335–36. The vizier provides an intriguing reinterpretation of the esoteric meaning of Kharbanda: the numerical value of "Shah Kharbanda" is identical with "the special shadow of the Creator" (Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:6; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:6–7).

87.   On Öljeitü's conversions, see Pfeiffer 1999.

88.   Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 56. Rashīd al-Dīn also assigns to Öljeitü's special rank the peace accord of 1304 between the Mongol khanates and the end of the Mongol civil war (*fitanhā*) that extended through a period of fifty years, even though the Ilkhans had no part in brokering this accord. On the peace negotiations, see Biran 1997, 60.

89.   This is likely a reference to the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh,* which seems to have been remade in a lavish presentation copy for the Ilkhan.

90.   Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 57.

91.   On naming and nomenclature in the Persianate world, see Kia 2020, 146–62.

92.   Öljeitü also took the name Muhammad, which is, surprisingly, missing from the vizier's list of names, although Muhammad was used on Öljeitü's coinage from the outset of his reign. See Diler 2006, 384ff.

93.   Names represented auspicious numbers (nine), colors (gold, blue, white), items (iron, steel), or results of good fortune (health, wealth, stability), along with names directly related to heaven (Möngke, eternity). See Atwood 2004a, 398. Other names, however, seem to have been purposely degrading and unlucky—likely to "confuse" evil spirits distributing disease or misfortune.

94.   He describes them as *khatāʾiyān,* but perhaps they were Tibetans. See Vaṣṣāf 1959–60, 260; Elverskog 2010, 149.

95.   Diler 2006, 327–33; Kolbas 2006, 278–79.

96.   Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 199; Grupper 2004, 50–62.

97.   Dotson 2015, 5.

98.   Ibid., 1–27.

99.   Kolbas 2006, 355–57.

100.   The ascension ceremony often entailed the ruler's renaming: see Sela 2003, 26.

101.   Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 66.

102.   Ibid., 67.

103.   She was the daughter of Qultugh-Temür Güregen (son-in-law) from Yesünjin, daughter of Chaghadai's son Baiqu (likely Chaghadai's grandson, Baiju, Möʾetüken's son). See Qāshānī 2005, 7; Landa 2019, 179. Eltüzmish initially received Abaqa's Tatar wife, Nuqdan's ordu (Rashīd al-Dīn, *Shuʿab-i panjgāna,* Ms. Topkapi Sarayi Ahmet 3 2937, under "Abaqa's wives"; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:515). Eltüzmish's sister Karamü Khatun was married to Ghazan, and received Dokuz's ordu (Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:644). Dokuz's ordu later passed to Eltüzmish (Qāshānī 2005, 7). Qāshānī lists her as his third wife, but perhaps her status changed owing to her position as Öljeitü's "mother of sons" (although her three sons all died during childhood). Qāshānī notes indeed that Gunjishkab, Öljeitü's chief wife, was barren, which indicates that she gained her status through seniority in marriage. For sterility as a reason for replacing a chief wife, see Shir 2006, 62–84. It was a common practice for a new Ilkhan to nominate a khatun to take charge of the major wealthy female *ordus:* see De Nicola 2016, 79–105.

104.   Amitai-Preiss 1996a.

105.   Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 68. See also the introduction to the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh,* where the vizier states that the Ilkhan's perpetual divine favor (*iqbāl, saʿāda*) protected the realm

from disasters and upheavals created by the celestial spheres. See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:25–6; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:5.

106. The performance of *karāmāt* was also extended to "wonder-making scholars": see Talmon-Heller 2009.

107. The Ilkhan "presented such miracles and states that no Sahib Qiran and saint [*valī*] had presented beforehand" (Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 79). Rashīd al-Dīn makes similar statements about Ghazan, though not nearly as elaborate as in Öljeitü's case. See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1335–41; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:664–69.

108. Binbaş 2011, 494–99.

109. See Van Ess (1981, 19), who places the *Nafāʾis* at the end of the manuscripts. See also Rashīd al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-sulṭāniyya.* Ms. Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Nuruosmaniye 3415, 321v (where the *Nafāʾis* appears before the prophetic genealogical tree; though according to the manuscript's table of contents, the *Nafāʾis* is the final *ẕayl: Kitāb al-sulṭāniyya,* Nuruosmaniye 3415, 3r; Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 3).

110. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 261.

111. Kamola 2019, 95.

112. Rashīd al-Dīn 1993, 2:1–37. The same treatise also appears in Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 351–92.

113. The vizier illustrates his point by presenting the case of two kings whose auspicious horoscopes are identical. The two battle each other. One ruler is vanquished while the other is victorious. The vizier faults the defeated king for displaying arrogance before the battle and for thus "blocking" the influence of his auspicious horoscope. He notes that the Mongols consider it ominous to display conceit prior to the battlefield—that is, they consider this behavior taboo. Thus, Mongol rational and monotheistic conventions about sinful conduct are aligned.

114. For example, the angel asks the Buddha, "what is the drawn and unsheathed sword that is sharp?" See Rashīd al-Dīn 2006, 149; Jahn 1965, lxi.

115. Rashīd al-Dīn 1993, 2:24–25.

116. On the early modern "Starlords" and "Letterlords" (rulers whose remarkable fate was inscribed in the celestial vault, revelation, or the universe) and the Timurid astrological-letterist ideological platform, see Melvin-Koushki 2018, 356–62.

117. Allsen 2001, 204–6; Yang 2019, 388–427.

118. Chinese dynasties also deify "the power of empirical heaven over government." See Baumann 2013; Jackson 2017, 298.

119. Assmann 2012, 371.

120. Baumann 2013, 273–78.

121. For this global pattern involving ruler conversion, particularly when it entailed the transition from immanentist to transcendentalist systems, see Strathern 2017.

122. Missionaries might take advantage of the "immanentist capacity to swiftly reclassify the moral categories of those beings wielding immanent power" and reconfigure the same "local metapersons as 'devil'" (Strathern 2019b, 286–87).

123. Ibid., 287.

124. Strathern 2007.

125. Srathern 2019b, 46–47; Assmann 1997, 3.

126. Elverskog 2006, 40–62.

127. Assmann 1997, 3; Assmann 2009, 8.

128. For example, his *Bayān al-miʿrāj* in Rashīd al-Dīn 2015b, 2:587–614.

129. Gruber 2010a, 22; Gruber 2010b, 27–49.

130. Al-Jazarī 1998, 1:422–23; Broadbridge 2008, 66–67.

131. They advised him to abandon Islam and purify himself by passing between two fires, as Mongol costume mandates, instead. See Pfeiffer 1999, 39.

132. Melville 1992, 205.

133. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1400; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:689. On the other hand, in Ghazan's coin reform, Heaven retained its position. On the reverse, we find: *The coinage of/ Ghāzān Maḥmūd/by the power/of Heaven.* The Chinggisid good fortune, however, was replaced by the *shahādah* and Muhammad (on the obverse). See Kolbas 2006, 323–26.

CHAPTER 4. KING OF KALAM

1. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 505ff. The family tree is preceded by a detailed list that includes the prophets and their descendants (categorized according to rank), followed by the Prophet Muhammad, the four first caliphs, the Prophet's companions (similarly categorized according to rank), the remaining caliphs (including the Fāṭimid caliphal line), and famous religious scholars. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 367–483.

2. Ibid., 3. The vizier was not the first to "invent" the tree, however. See Binbaş 2011, 482. The vizier's graphic design of the tree may have been influenced by portable European works portraying Christ's lineage from Adam, along with parallel Jewish-gentile biblical lines of kings and priests. See Kamola 2019, 129–30.

3. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 503–5; Binbaş 2011, 493–96.

4. The identification of Hermes as Dhū al-Qarnayan (along with the same lineage) appears in Banākatī's history as well. Julia Rubanovich observes that this genealogy confounds the lineages of the two Dhū al-Qarnayans: *al-akbar* (builder of the wall) and *al-asghar* (Iskandar). The association of Iskandar with Hermes might be linked to the Arabic tradition regarding the former's transmission of Hermetical writings. See Rubanovich 2015, 219.

5. They are Bukhtanṣar [Nebuchadnezzar II], Pharaoh Sinān, and Shaddād ibn ʿĀd, the king of the people of ʿĀd in the Qurʾan and a mythic world ruler according to Islamic tradition. Guy Ron-Gilboa navigates the many legends and conflicting reports on Shaddād ibn ʿĀd as a tyrant sinner, a mighty builder, and a legendary, morally upstanding king. See Ron-Gilboa 2019.

6. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 509.

7. Rosenthal 1958, 128.

8. Auer 2012, 48–56; Yilmaz 2018, 188–89.

9. Ben-Dor Benite, Geroulanos, and Jerr 2017, 5.

10. Dunnell 1996, 20.

11. Collins 1998, 471–75; Walter 2009, 219.

12. Jaffer 2015, 84–117.

13. See Rashīd al-Dīn's treatise on *Sharḥ-i ʿulūm-i maʿaqūl va-manqūl*: Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 401–2.

14. Ibid., 87.

15. Rashīd al-Dīn, MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Aya Sofya 3596, 4r.

16. Ibid., 2r–2v.

17. Rashīd al-Dīn's notion of the priority of natural knowledge accords with Rāzī's view that theological convictions obtained through man's natural disposition (*fiṭra*) are "preferable to knowledge obtained through speculative arguments" (Abrahamov 1993, 25–26).

18. For Rāzī's reliance on this for his theory of the Prophet's superior position as the pinnacle of human existence, see Jacobsen Ben Hammed 2018, 305; Noble 2021, 237–38. Interestingly, in his treatise on the Prophet's illiteracy (*ummī-yi rasūl*), the vizier contrasts instead "acquired knowledge" (*kasbī*) with "imparted knowledge" (*iṭāʾī*)—that is, *ʿilm-i ladunī* (knowledge imparted by God/divine knowledge), "which is from the effluence of divine inspiration, and is exclusive to the prophets and some saints." This *ʿilm-i ladunī* becomes the most perfected with Muhammad. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015b, 2:650.

19. Rashīd al-Dīn 1976–77, 38–39.

20. Shihadeh 2006, 31. Muslim theologians define *ʿilm badīhī* (self-evident, a priori, or direct knowledge) as one type of the two kinds of the *ʿilm ḍarūrī*, necessary knowledge (primary or immediate knowledge). The latter is defined in contrast to acquired knowledge (*muktasab*) as knowledge "occurring without man's having power to produce and prove it" (Abrahamov 1993, 21). See also Sabra 1994, 21–22.

21. Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 82–83.

22. Ibid.

23. Shihadeh 2006, 125–26, 135.

24. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015b, 2:651. In another treatise, he juxtaposes the Prophet's poverty with *ʿilm-i fiṭrī*, and wealth with *ʿilm-i muktasabī*, to explain the Prophet's saying: "poverty is my pride" (*al-faqr fakhrī*). He writes that "the greater natural knowledge one has, he has less of a need for exhorting himself with physical learning, which is the acquired knowledge and in accordance with his saying 'over every possessor of knowledge, there is one who is more knowing' (Qurʾan 12:76), they [people] have great many ranks [of knowledge], and there is no doubt that since their states in this world are finite, there is an end to human perfection; therefore, there is necessarily an individual in whom human natural knowledge [*ʿilm-i fiṭrī-yi insānī*] reaches perfection. The attribute of this individual is that he could have no need whatsoever for acquired knowledge, and since he is free from it, he is also free from perfecting himself through his body. As this can be the attribute and rank of finality [*martaba-yi khātimiyya*] [. . .] there is no doubt that full human perfection sealed with the seal of the prophets [. . . .]" See Rashīd al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-asʾila.* Ms. Ayasofya 2180, fols. 33–34.

25. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015b, 2:591.

26. Ibid., 590–91.

27. In *Explanation of Truths,* the vizier explains the existence of a near-endless hierarchy of ranks within the category of perfect, absolute kingship (*muṭlaqan pādshāhān*) with Öljeitü at its pinnacle. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 83.

28. Anjum 2012, 223, 228.

29. Ibid., 224.

30. Ibid., 228–30.

31. On the transmission of pre-Islamic Iranian notions of the preordained hierarchical social order into Islam's political theory, as well as the religious rationalization of social difference, see Marlow 1997, 117–55.

32. Anjum 2012, 203.

33. This is the mystic Tāj al-Dīn Muʾminān Qazvīnī (d. 1308), a former deputy and chancellery director under the vizier Juvaynī (d. 1285). After his patron Juvaynī's execution and the political turmoil that ensued from the Juvaynīs' downfall, Tāj al-Dīn withdrew to a secluded *zāviya* in Tabriz. He was member of the influential Muʾminān family of state officials from the city of Qazvīn. See Qāshānī 2005, 74–5.

34. The vizier argues for the ability of certain, perfected souls to accomplish things swiftly, leading to the impression of time becoming deaccelerated. See Pfeiffer 2019, 24–26.

35. Rashīd al-Dīn 1976–77, 1:140–66. Rashīd al-Dīn often addresses his lack of formal education in the religious sciences and assigns his "ignorance" to his preoccupation with state service. Only after Öljeitü's enthronement, and with his encouragement, did Rashīd al-Dīn begin to write theological treatises. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 1:512–13. For the vizier (like the Ilkhan Öljeitü) as a "*homo novus*," see Van Ess 1981, 44; Hoffmann 2013, 9.

36. Griffel 2010, 169–74.

37. He states that it is sensitive information that should not be revealed to the ignorant (*jāhil*), but also that it should not be concealed from those capable (*mustaʿidd*) of benefitting from it. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 76–77.

38. Ibid.

39. Compare with Avicenna's statement: "All sensible and intellectual matters have aspects that can be known through syllogism [*bi-l-qiyās*] and characteristic states that are known [only] by experience [*bi-l-tajriba*]. Just as neither flavor nor the ultimate nature of sensory pleasure can be captured by syllogism—for at most, syllogism can apprehend the affirmation of their [existence] devoid of specific details [. . .] as for their specific characteristic, however, it can only be known through direct appreciation [*mubāshara*], to which not everyone is guided" (trans. Treiger 2012, 60–61).

40. Öljeitü explains that every individual has his own fixed signs, which allow the ruler to decipher their intentions and plans ahead of time. He promises to reveal these signs to the vizier and Amīr ʿAlī, the commander of the falconers (*qushchiyān*). Amīr ʿAlī had been in Öljeitü's company from an early age and was highly regarded by the Ilkhan. He was a commander of a thousand men and son of the great amir Baibuqa *qushchi* (falconer). See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 77. Rashīd al-Dīn also ascribes to Ghazan the ability to predict the future and links this to his status as a Sahib Qiran king. Ghazan was educated in geomancy, horses' collarbone- and teeth-reading, and "various fortune-telling [*fāl*] devices." See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1348–49; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:671–72.

41. Jaffer 2015, 139–40, 142.

42. Ghazālī also conceives of two modes of cognition, one attained by learning and acquisition (*iktisāb*) and another through divine inspiration (*ilhām*) in the case of the saints, or revelation in the case of the prophets. See Treiger 2012, 64ff.

43. Jaffer 2015, 160.

44. On this verse, see below.

45. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 72–73.

46. The Simurgh is prevalent in Ilkhanid art, through the illustrated Shahnama scenes and other works featuring illustrations of animals. In most manuscripts, it appears as "an elongated bird deriving from the Chinese phoenix" (Berlekamp 2007, 75; cf. Berlekamp, Lo, and Yidan 2016, 76).

47. When the *Book of the Sultan* was composed, Öljeitü was in his mid to late twenties. There are several explanations for why the Prophet received revelations only at the age of forty. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 225–26.

48. Ibid., 79–80.

49. Ibid., 80–81.

50. Ibid., 158–62.

51. Ibid., 122–23.

52. Fletcher 1986, 34. "Immanentist priesthoods" are not autonomous from the political leadership. They are part of state power. See Strathern 2019b, 124–27.

53. Ibid., 176–82.

54. Rashīd al-Dīn compares Muhammad to a vizier. The latter converses with the king only on the more significant assignments, but sends the king's intimates (the angels) as messengers to the king to communicate regarding the more mundane state matters. Rashīd al-Dīn also points to other explanations for why the Prophet received revelations via angels—for example, so that the miracle would be visible to the Arabs. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 173–75.

55. Jaffer 2015, 161.

56. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 72.

57. "The hearts of kings are the treasuries of God" (*qulūb al-mulūk khazāʾin Allāh*). Rāzī adopts Ghazālī's conception of the heart as the seat of divine lights and knowledge. See Jaffer 2015, 161.

58. A similar phrase is employed by authors in the Delhi sultanate. See Auer 2012, 60.

59. Within this rank of *absolute kings and sultans*, too, there is a great variety of ranks: some kings are held in such a high regard that they receive kinds of inspiration (*ilhām*) in accordance with their capacity. See Rashīd al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-asʾila*. Ms. Ayasofya 2180, fols. 33–44.

60. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 96. The exceptional nature of the Ilkhan's questions is indicative of this divine guidance since "a good question is already half the wisdom" (ibid., 74).

61. Ibid., 75.

62. Ibid., 73–74. The vizier clarifies that this miracle is not considered a prophetic miracle (*muʿjaz*).

63. Ibid., 125; Shihadeh 2006, 135. Rāzī uses the light motif to represent the Prophet's ability to perfect the souls of the believers: his soul "was a powerful, luminous, pure and radiant soul. So if Muḥammad supplicates [God] on [people's] behalf [. . . ,] effects of his spiritual power will emanate upon their souls. Their souls will become illuminated by this, their spirits will become purified, and they will be transformed from darkness into light, and from corporality into spirituality" (Shihadeh 2006, 142). On Rāzī's synthesis of Avicennan and Ghazālīan concepts to explain the Prophet's moral perfection, see Jaffer 2015, 210–11; Jacobsen Ben Hammed 2018, 306.

64. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 193, 220–21.

65. Ibid., 194.

66. Endress 2006, 398–99 (on the "Hellenization of the language of *kalam*"); Eichner 2009.

67. According to the vizier, the saying "means that just like the kings are the kings of the people so are their words the kings of all other words" (Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 83). Öljeitü's "words are the kings of the words of kings *and the saints*" (Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 75).

68. As with Christianity, conversion to Islam from the Mongols' strongly immanentist system was less "a matter of switching identities" and more of "learning what it is to have a religious identity in the first place" (Strathern 2019b, 259).

69. "The Mongols understood the sciences to be concrete, practical and perceptible—a means of governing nature, not explaining it" (Baumann 2013, 242). See also Jackson 2018, 317–19.

70. Strathern 2019b, 312.

71. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-asʾila.* Ms. Ayasofya 2180, fols.33–44.

72. Rashīd al-Dīn compares this to a Chinese parable he encountered: "whoever's stature is upright and stands tall, his shadow likewise will be upright." He explains that "the meaning of this is that whoever has the right intention, his actions are likewise righteous" (ibid). The Ottoman courtier and scholar Idrīs Bidlīsī (1457–1520) has a similar interpretation of the "Shadow of God" as a ruler who possesses "the all-comprehensiveness described by the divine traits" (Markiewicz 2019, 259, 266–67).

73. Arjomand 1984, 91–100 (quotation on 95); Arjomand 2003; Babayan 2002, 302–3. Rāzī describes the perfect wise king as the "absolute administrator [*sāyis-i muṭlaq*], worthy of [the designation] viceregent of the Lawgiver," the Prophet. See Rāzī 2003, 466.

74. Sufi-minded authors "mystified" or reinterpreted the caliphate as a vessel for the unification of the spiritual and temporal authority in the Ottoman sultan. See Yilmaz 2018, 188. For the emergence of the Ottoman conception of universal kingship encapsulated by the term *khilāfat-i rahmānī*, see Markiewicz 2019, 240–84. For the Timurid repurposing of the caliph, see Binbaş 2016, 257–61.

75. The same Qur'anic verse also appears in Ghazan's second Syrian letter in order to emphasize the Ilkhan's just rule in contrast to the tyranny of the Mamluk sultans. See Brack 2016, 162–71.

76. Unlike other titles that needed to be infused with moralistic content or "embedded in the broader political culture or political theory" to moralize authority, the Qur'anic-rooted title of "caliph" was already imbued with such ethical force that it denied any moral autonomy to the ruler who claimed it. See Yilmaz 2018, 279.

77. Ibid., 187–88. However, the two titles were further favored as "evidence" for the need for a unified rulership under a single, undisputed sultan replicating God's undivided command. See ibid., 182–83.

78. Khalidi 1975, 64. For anthropomorphism, see Holtzman 2018.

79. Rashīd al-Dīn 1993, 2:26.

80. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 73–74.

81. *Inna allāh yabʿathu li-hadhihi al-umma ʿalā raʾs kull miʾa sana man yujaddid lahā amr dīnihā.*

82. The eschatological classification of the *tajdīd* tradition was a later, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century innovation. See Landau-Tasseron 1989; Freidman 1989, 97.

83. Melvin-Koushki 2018; Markiewicz 2019, 171–76, 266–67; Mauder 2021, 757–68.

84. *man yuqawwī lahā amr dīnihā.* The vizier explains the designation of Öljeitü as this reformer king: "Since it is clear that prior to him, for a period of a hundred years, there was no one who strengthened the religion of Islam but a group of unbelievers from the idol worshipers and the people of other faiths, whose religion was abrogated, began making a useless effort [*ḥarakat al-madhbūḥ*—literally: the movement of the slaughtered], and they

rebuilt their places of worship, which had been destroyed, and during this hundred years, day after day, they were strengthened" until "all the traces of these unbelievers were effaced with the ray of light" of the king. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 50–51.

85. Vaṣṣāf 1959–60, 539.

86. The vizier's example predated the earliest usage of the title for political leaders. See Van Steenbergen 2012.

87. The vizier's "innovation," however, did not have a lasting influence with later, fifteenth-century authors, who used the unaltered version. For an example, see Ūzūn Ḥasan's "Sunni *tajdīd*" claims (Woods 1999, 100–106, 140).

88. Subtelny 1995; Subtelny 1993, 14–23. Samarqandī (d. 1482), on the other hand, claimed that Shāhrukh was the Mujaddid, since he was appointed ruler of Khurasan in 800 AH. See Samarqandī 2004, 3:494–96.

89. Rashīd al-Dīn 2015a, 51.

90. I borrow this term from al-Azmeh 2001, 41.

91. On the relationship between claims to divine selection and the pattern of religious reformer kings, see Brack 2019b.

92. Qazvīnī 1362/1983, 606–7; Sanjian 1969, 6.

93. The appropriation of the title of Sahib Qiran to represent an Ilkhanid discourse of religious reformer kingship was further seen in the short-lived rebellion (1322–23) of Temürtash (d. 1327), the Mongol governor of Rum (Anatolia). The Mongol amir used this discourse to claim for himself divine favor in place of the ruling Chinggisid ruler. Temürtash not only employed similar reforms, including anti-dhimmi measures in Anatolia and persecuting Christian communities during his campaigns; he also proclaimed himself Mahdi, the ultimate religious reformer. An eyewitness account of Temürtash's uprising stated that the Mongol rebel linked his Mahdi claim with the title Sahib Qiran. See Aflākī 1959–61, 2:977–78; Aflākī 2002, 684–85.

94. Woods 1999, 4–8.

95. De Rachewiltz 2004, 1:168; 2:869–73; Franke 1978, 21.

96. Compare with Hülegü's letter to King Louis IX of France (1262), where Teb Tenggeri's prophecy is embedded into a Christian-biblical framework: he is the last in a chain of prophetic communications to mankind. See Aigle 2005, 152–53; Meyvaert 1981, 245–59.

97. Gruber 2018, 82–139; Hillenbrand 2014, 65–75.

98. Srathern 2019b, 164–69.

99. Noble 2021, 239.

100. The latter "by means of connection with their individual perfect natures, can complete their own epistemological ascent through the ontological hierarchy of reality . . . and realise the perfection of philosophy" (Noble 2021, 229, 251).

CHAPTER 5. FROM ANCESTOR WORSHIP TO SHRINE-CENTERED KINGSHIP

1. Moin 2015.

2. Elverskog 2006, 52–53.

3. Srathern 2019b, 168. Further, through Chinggis Khan's posthumous assumption of the cosmic or ritualized role in sustaining Mongol-Chinggisid political power, we find that

his earlier assumption of the priestly-shamanic function following his execution of Teb Tenggeri comes full circle. See ibid., 173.

4. DeWeese 1994, 524. See also his discussion of ancestor veneration and rituals of libation, where he notes: "the khan and his deceased ancestors' spirits, whether addressed at the royal burial ground or in some other sanctified reserve, come to represent the whole people, thereby further underscoring the vital communal and political imperatives requiring the veneration of imperial ancestors" (ibid., 220).

5. Elverskog 2006, 48–51.

6. Thus, "after each emperor died, his portrait hall was installed for him and his ancestors in the temple he had built." Charleux refers to them as "inhabited portraits" (Charleux 2010, 9; cf. Elverskog 2006, 51). Elverskog notes that the complex was not arranged according to Confucian ritual or Chinese ancestor worship.

7. On memorial feasts for the ancestors, see DeWeese 1994, 215–16.

8. *Qoruq* also meant a forbidden hunting or recreational preserve, and *qoruq* reservations were also linked to enthronement sites. Öljeitü's itinerary included visits to *qoruq* sites which suggests that the term continued to be associated in the Ilkhanate with imperial burial sites. DeWeese 1994, 181–203; Barthold and Rogers 1970.

9. Jackson 2017, 336.

10. Blair 2019, 318–355.

11. In his history, Rashīd al-Dīn casts the Ilkhanid transition to Islamic burial practices in terms of reaping (transcendentalist) benefits in the Hereafter versus the "futility" of the Mongol tradition of burying the dead in unmarked *qoruq* sites. Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3: 685; Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1375–76. Stories about the forbidden nature, "unknowability and inviolability" of Chinggisid burial sites may have been overstated to increase the sense of their sacrality. DeWeese 1994, 216–217 (n132).

12. Ibid., 290–92. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, in his transition from an unmarked grave to a monumental shrine, Ghazan was inspired by his visitations to ʿAlid and saintly shrines, as well as by his wish to compete with the impressive grave of Saljuq Sultan Sanjar in Marv. Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3: 685; Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1375–76. I thank Golriz Farshi for drawing this to my attention and sharing her paper with me (Farshi 2022).

13. DeWeese 1994, 192.

14. Thus, Jackson also notes that the Mongols might have considered the role of the Sufis in shrines "akin to that of the guards traditionally stationed close by the graves of Mongol princes" (Jackson 2017, 347).

15. Elverskog 2006, 48–50.

16. Thus, the vizier draws a distinction earlier in the *Blessed History of Ghazan* between the Mongols—some of whom were monotheists (*muvaḥḥid*)—and "the other idol-worshipper and polytheist peoples including the Uyghurs and others." The latter group seems to particularly include the Buddhists. See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:29; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:16.

17. The vizier uses the same term to refer to Chinggisid effigies, in front of which incense was burnt, in the "off-limit" *qoruq* funerary sanctuary in Burkhan Khaldun (in Hentii mountains). Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2: 949; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3: 464. Yet, this account by Rashīd al-Dīn might refer to Arghun's portrait adorning the hall of a Buddhist shrine, similar to what we find in Buddhist monasteries in the Yuan capital. For the latter, see: Charleux 2010.

18. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2: 1357; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3: 676.

19. Ibid.

20. For example: Samten and Martin 2014/15, 311.

21. The talisman recorded the prayers and proverbs of Ṣadr al-Dīn's father. Melville 1990b, 163. Several hagiographies from the period designate Ghazan as the recipient of blessed attire. For example, per Ghazan's request, Shaykh Zāhid handed him his shirt, which Ibn Bazzāz further claims Ghazan was buried in. Ibn Bazzāz 1994, 208–9. And according to Aflākī, Ghazan had a mantle with Rūmī's verses stitched in gold that he wore whenever he sat on the throne. See Aflākī 2002, 593.

22. For example, see Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1128; and Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:567, where court shamans and Buddhists advise how to dispose of a suspicious talisman-like item found in the possession of a certain administrator.

23. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1163–64; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:567.

24. The Śarīra ("Sha-ri-ram") were "white, bright, and transparent," pea-sized, inde-structible, spherical relics that appeared after the cremation of the Buddhist saints (formed from various body parts—bone marrow to toenail). These relics might also be shaped like a letter or an image, for example, showing a Buddhist deity. They could reproduce and grow. See Martin 1994, 281–83; Stone 2005, 60.

25. Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1163–64; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:567. Written here as Sharīl, the Uyghur-Mongolian terms for Śarīra. See Elverskog 2010, 302n144.

26. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 111–12. The author also notes that there is a mine of red rubies there, associating the Buddhist relics with rare and precious stones.

27. "While relics in Tibet were, and are, conceived as sources of blessings, these bless-ings are considered more miraculous aids to devotion and spiritual growth than as restorers of bodily health" (Martin 1989, 185).

28. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 271–74.

29. Strathern 2019b, 93.

30. Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 273.

31. Some Buddhist authorities, even contemporaneous with the vizier, presented a skep-tical attitude toward the relics, arguing that they were mostly, "deceitfully manufactured." Such supernatural occurrences could also be interpreted as ominous signs. See Martin 1994, 285–90.

32. Nebuchadnezzar cast three Israelites—Azariah, Hananiah, and Mishael—into the furnace because they refused to worship idols, and he watched them as they remained unharmed by the fire. See Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 272–74.

33. The same empirical tendency is found among the Mughal sultans, for example, emperor Akbar's preference for "concrete thought and tactile knowledge" and his son Jahāngīr's (1569–1627) attraction to "the somatic and the talismanic." See Moin 2012, 145–46, 201–4.

34. Algar 1988, 754–55; Pfeiffer 1999, 44–46. Other examples include the Ilkhan Tegüder's (r. 1282–84) close relationship with a Qalandar dervish, Īshān Ḥasan Menglī (Pfeiffer 2006, 383–85), and the prince Ala Fireng's participation in clandestine *samāʿ* ses-sions with an antinomian Tabrizi shaykh named Pīr Yaʿqūb Bāghbānī (according to Rashīd al-Dīn) or Maḥmūd Dīwānā (according to al-Ṣafadī). During the ceremony, the shaykh "promised" the prince the Ilkhanid throne. See Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 2:1320–21; al-Ṣafadī 1998, 5: 412–13.

35. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa 2005, 92–93.

36. DeWeese 1994, 157–79.

37. According to Muslim tradition, Ibrāhīm, who was thrown by Namrūd into the fire, spent a blissful time there surrounded by tress and brooks. See Heller 2012. The account of the shaykhs' ordeal echoes this. A depiction of Ibrāhīm sitting in the fire like in a heavenly garden (after being catapulted into the fire) is found in *Compendium* copies as well.

38. Consuming or walking on fire was linked to the Rifāʿiyya order: see Biran 2016, 79–88. According to other accounts, which identify Hülegü's son as the (future) Ilkhan Tegüder, the boy converts after this experience instead of the Ilkhan. See Pfeiffer 2003, 356–60, 382–83.

39. Qāshānī 2005, 98–9; DeWeese 1994, 260–61; Pfeiffer 1999, 39.

40. In Buddhist tradition, "fire resistance" is a marker of sainthood—achieved through spiritual cultivation in one's previous lives. See Martin 1994, 281.

41. *Zayl-i risāla-yi ziyārat* in Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 331–40.

42. The month of Shaʿbān is often devoted to the commemoration of the dead. *Laylat al-barāʾa,* the "night of quittancy" (the night of the fourteenth or fifteenth), is particularly potent for saying prayers for the dead.

43. Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 332.

44. Ibid., 331–40.

45. Biran 2007, 29–30; Aigle 2014, 121–33; De Rachewiltz 1973.

46. Martin 1994, 282.

47. Elverskog 2006, 55.

48. Three days later, the Buddha appeared in the sky. He ordered his followers not to grieve his demise, since he had achieved nirvana. See Jahn 1965, xlviii; Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 164.

49. Sheila Canby suggests that this dome alludes to the stupa on which the Buddha's ashes were placed after his cremation. See Canby 1993, 305.

50. Ibid, 305.

51. Rashīd al-Dīn 2006a, 34; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh,* Ms. Royal Asiatic Society A 27, fol. 2049v (Arabic); Jahn 1971, 42 (translation). This peculiar version of the Buddha's birth differs from that found in the *History of India,* where it is foreshadowed by a dream of the Buddha's mother Māhā Māyā. See Jahn 1965, xli; Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 106. While the story of the Buddha's birth in the *History of China* does share the contours and main details of the version of the Buddha's birth in the *Fozu lidai tongzai,* including the Buddha's emergence from the right side of his mother and the Persian rendering of names according to the Chinese Chan tradition, the impregnation of the Buddha's virgin mother by a mysterious light is significantly missing from the *Fozu lidai tongzai.* See Calzolaio and Fiaschetti 2019, 23–27.

52. For example, in Kamālashrī's account, the Mongols are said to have descended from a Buddhist Indian prince. This dervish-like prince falls in love with one of his father's wives, and the two are expelled by his father the king to Turkistan, where they hide in the hollow of a giant tree. The Mongols are offspring of the couple's children, who are born and raised within the tree. See Jahn 1965, lxxviii–lxxxv; Rashīd al-Dīn 2006b, 98–100. For the Inner Asian element of the tree as a refuge and birthplace (echoing an "Inner Asian ethnogonic myth"), see DeWeese 1994, 285–86.

53. Biran 2007, 116–17; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:116–17.

54. Biran 2007, 117; Aigle 2014, 128–29; ʿUmarī 1968, 2–3 (Arabic). A similar accusation was also made by Ibn Taymīya. See Ibn Taymīya 1961–67/1995, 28:521–22. ʿUmarī furthermore offers an etymology for the *Niruʾun,* the "backbone," the Mongol elite who descended from Alan Qoʾa's three sons. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, the *Niruʾun* "means backbone, and an indication of the pure line is that it came into existence from light" (Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 1:98; Rashīd al-Dīn 1994, 1:183). ʿUmarī suggests, however, that the three sons were named *al-nūrāniyyīn* "in connection to the light that their mother claimed that came down into her."

55. Aigle 2014, 122–23.

56. Uri Rubin, 1975, 98–101.

57. Binbaş 2016, 283–84. On the Timurids' pro-ʿAlīd religious "sentimentalism" despite their proclaimed Sunnīsm, see Amoretti 1968, 615–16.

58. Meri 2002, 20–24.

59. Ibid., 158–59; Anonymous, *Kitāb al-ḥawādith* 1997, 441.

60. Kamola 2019, 92–93.

61. Jackson 2009. 109–22; Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:554. For shrine visitation during hunting expeditions, see Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:654.

62. Jackson 2017, 314–15. See, for example, Ghazan's renovation of the shrine of Sufi Sayyid Tāj al-ʿĀrifīn Abū al-Wafāʾ (d. 1101 or 1107) in Iraq: Rashīd al-Dīn 1998–99, 3:635, 683.

63. These sites became further associated during this period with Shīʿī devotion and confessional-communal identity, though they remained sites of Sunnī pilgrimage as well. See Pfeiffer 2014, 144.

64. Hülegü, for example, visited ʿAlī's *mashhad* in Najaf with the Shīʿī polymath Ṭūsī. The latter told Hülegü about ʿAlī's virtues. According to Qāshānī, Hülegü responded that "notwithstanding the success of [his] enemies still in nowadays, he [ʿAlī] has a praiseworthy and precious group of followers," and anyone wishing to hurt them should fear for his soul. See Qāshānī 1965, 12.

65. Pfeiffer 1999, 35–67, esp. 41 (for the difficulty in assigning an exact date to the Ilkhan's conversion due to its gradual nature); Kamola 2019, 104–5.

66. Pfeiffer 1999, 39; Melville 1990a, 57, 65; Qāshānī 2005, 100. According to Qāshānī, this dream was the final "proof" that pushed Öljeitü to finalize his conversion. Melville suggests that this visit to the shrine took place on Shaʿban or Shawwāl 709 AH (1310 AD). This means his visit to Kabralā (and to Salmān's shrine) likely occurred close to his conversion to Shīʿīsm.

67. The beginning of Rajab 709 AH. This visit took place about a year before Öljeitü's night-time expedition discussed above.

68. On Ḥillī's ties to the court, see Schmidtke 1991, 23–33.

69. Qāshānī 2005, 101.

70. Van Ess 1981, 47–48. According to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, Fakhr al-Dīn Ḥillī was present at the Ilkhan's court as of 1310–11. See Ibn al-Fuwaṭī 1995, 3: 134–35.

71. On Öljeitü's "mobile school," see Qāshānī 2005, 108; Schmidtke 1991, 30.

72. Pfeiffer 1991, 40–41.

73. For the letter, see Griffel 2007, 326–30.

74. Furthermore, if the soul of the supplicant is in the same level as that of the dead, then a certain encounter happens, in which, "like two polished mirrors" (*marāʾayn ṣaqīlatayn*), the two souls reflect each other's light: the soul of dead is able to gain from the acquired knowledge and excellent morals of the living soul, and the "brilliant knowledges and powerfully, perfect effects" of the soul of the departed are "reflected" like light in the soul of the living, and in this way it gains benefit from the visitation. See Rāzī 1987, 7:275–77; Jacobsen Ben Hammed 2018, 287–95.

75. Talmon-Heller 2007, 179.

76. In this regard, the vizier compares shrine visitation to the performance of the *ḥajj.* Indeed, he argues elsewhere that visitation of the shrines of the prophets and the saints might even be more beneficial than the *ḥajj.* See Rashīd al-Dīn 2013, 271.

77. The Islamic practice of grave visitation (*ziyāra*) was not exclusive to the saints but included a range of devotional practices that centered on the visitations of dead relatives, teachers, and companions. See Taylor 1998, 108–9.

78. The vizier adds here another possible "connection" between the souls of the departed and the living: the eternal acquaintance of their spirits prior to their joining their body (*taʿāruf azlī*).

79. Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 323–30.

80. Pfeiffer 2014; Brack 2019a (for the role of Jewish agents in these sectarian politics).

81. The Ilkhans extensively relied on their claim to royal pedigree in their diplomatic relations and polemics against the Mamluk Sultanate: see Broadbridge 2008, 12–13, 29–30, 75, 101.

82. Pfeiffer 2014.

83. Qāshānī 2005, 10–13.

84. Amir-Moezzi 2014.

85. Raḥīmlū 1973, 144–45; Pfeiffer 2014, 159.

86. Qāshānī 2005, 101. The pro-Shīʿī Mongol commander Taramtāz, who is credited with a central role in Öljeitü's conversion, makes the same comparison: see ibid., 99; Pfeiffer 2014, 145.

87. Qāshānī 2005, 99; Pfeiffer 1999, 40.

88. He was from a distinguished family of Qazvīnīs, who, throughout the thirteenth century, were the chief judges of Maragha. The family's ties to the Ilkhanid political-intellectual elite were also consolidated through Niẓām al-Dīn's marriage to Ṭūsī's granddaughter. See Ibn al-Fuwaṭī 1995, 2:308; 3:515; 4:498; 5:80–81.

89. Niẓām al-Dīn's court performances had earlier won over Öljeitü, convincing the Ilkhan to switch from the Ḥanafī to the Shāfiʿī school; in fact, the Ilkhan appointed him as chief judge also to supervise the Ḥanafīs, much to their chagrin. These Shāfiʿī-Ḥanafī court squabbles later gave way to the dispute with Shīʿism. See Qāshānī 2005, 96–100. Niẓām al-Dīn was also appointed to teach in Öljeitü's "mobile madrasa."

90. The vizier writes of the 1310 Sultaniyya debate to which the two, Niẓām al-Dīn and Ḥillī, were assigned by order of Öljeitü to discuss the prophetic tradition, "I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī its gate." See Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 393–99.

91. Rashīd al-Dīn 2016, 246r–48r. The vizier presents the work as a *ẕayl* to his earlier treatise in *Kitāb-i tawẕīḥāt-i Rashīdī* on the *shuʿab,* the "Branches of the Prophet."

92. Pourjavady 2020, 339; Schmidtke 1991, 52–53.

93. Furthermore, maintaining Sunnism as the dominant royal creed would be helpful in appeasing the population of Syria and Egypt were the Ilkhan to conquer them. See Qāshānī 2005, 95; Broadbridge 2008, 68. We also find Rashīd al-Dīn employing the same confessional-oriented arguments about privileged lineage that the Shīʿīs and *sayyids* effectively used to gain the support of Öljeitü, to remove his main Shīʿī competition at the court, Sayyid Āvajī. See Brack 2019a, 401–2; Pfeiffer 2014, 147.

94. Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 393–99. Öljeitü himself commented on the functional nature of the gate (ʿAlī), which sets it apart from other parts of the city, noting that without the gate, no one can enter or leave the city, and no benefit can be attained from the city (knowledge, the Prophet). See Kamola 2013, 220–21.

95. Wisnovsky 2018, 271. See also his attempt to bridge the "gap" in the question of *jabr* versus *qadr* by suggesting that each Qurʾanic verse be explored separately and on its own account (ignoring the principle of abrogation or historical order of the verses). See Klein-Franke 2004, 527–45. Note that Klein-Franke's attribution of the vizier's approach to Shīʿī influences is unmerited; rather, both Shīʿī authors of the period and the vizier draw on the same theological rationalism following Rāzī.

96. Wisnovsky situates Ḥillī's comments as part of a broader project of "marketing" the theology of Twelver Shīʿism as "the natural home of Avicennian metaphysics" and of philosophical theology, which was also a major concern for contemporaneous Ilkhanid Sunnī-Ashʿarite scholars. See Wisnovsky 2018.

97. Schmidtke suggests that a scholar of such standing as Ḥillī being willing to "pose questions" to Rashīd al-Dīn "indicates his eagerness to ingratiate himself with the vizier" (Schmidtke 1991, 29).

98. Ḥillī devoted a work to Rashīd al-Dīn's rival, Saʿd al-Dīn Sāvajī (*Risāla al-Saʿdiyya*). That Ḥillī appears on the list of recipients of gifts from Rashīd al-Dīn, and that he received a larger sum than others, does not necessarily contradict the idea that the vizier saw in Ḥillī's position at the court an incursion. Rather, it speaks to the Mongol ruler's high regard for the Shīʿī scholar. See Schmidtke 1991, 28–29.

99. Dreams and visions often feature in accounts of shrine foundation: the saint would communicate with the living through a dream demanding the construction of a lavish shrine above his grave. See Meri 2002, 122.

100. Sulṭāniyya was established in one of the Ilkhans' favorite summer camps, Qonqur Ölöng ("the pasture grounds of the Alezans").

101. This new scheme "emphasized horizontality and the equality of all eight interior iwans." See Blair 2013, 119.

102. Ibid., 121.

103. Blair 2013, 122–23; Blair 1987, 70.

104. These rumors echo earlier stories about Arghun and his Jewish vizier Saʿd al-Dawla's plan to transform the Kaʿba into a Buddhist temple. See Brack 2019a, 385.

105. Except for the Ilkhanid administrator Mustawfī Qazvīnī, who writes that the ruler translated a prophetic relic—one of Muḥammad's hairs—to the House of the Sayyids (*dār al-siyāda*). See Mustawfī Qazvīnī 1999, 2:1423. On this institution, built under Ghazan and his successors in major cities of the Ilkhanate, see Pfeiffer 2014, 146–50.

106. In contrast to the clearly Shīʿī-leaning mihrab the Ilkhan built in the Congregational Mosque in the Sunnī stronghold of Isfahan in 1310. See Blair 1987, 70–71.

107. Inscriptions incorporating the Prophet's companions, despised by the Shīʿīs, were not uncommon in ʿAlīd sites under Sunnī rule. See Mulder 2014, 96–97; Moin 2015, 483.

108. It included a long quote from Surat al-Anbiyāʾ (21:105–12), which reflects Islam's triumphant, polemical, inheritance of the Abrahamic religions through the continuity of revelation, describes Muḥammad's prophetic mission as God's mercy to humanity, reaffirms his oneness, invites the believers' submission and conversion, and finally warns of the trails of the Day of Judgment. These verses, and in particular Qurʾan 21:105 ("For We have written in the Psalms, after the Remembrance, 'the earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants'") appear in inscriptions on buildings reclaimed by the Muslims that thus expressed "dominance over Byzantines and other outside rivals" (Blair 1987, 53–54, 72–73; cf. Blair 2013, 125–26). This understanding is confirmed by Mustawfī Qazvīnī, who describes Salāḥ al-Dīn ascribing this verse on the al-Aqsa Mosque's gate. See Mustawfī Qazvīnī 1919, 18. For Öljeitü's involvement and aspirations in the Hijaz, see Melville 1992, 199–201, 203; Broadbridge 2008, 102.

109. Blair 1986, 143.

110. Blair 2013, 127.

111. Ibid., 126–27.

112. This also invited a change to the status of the temples of sage-kings, which were elevated now to the rank of palaces, and reflected therefore the political repositioning of their enshrined deities. See Jinping 2020, 309–57.

113. Blair 2013, 146–62.

114. Blair 1986, 140.

115. The allegation that he suffered from a mental illness owing to a hunting accident in 1397, ultimately requiring Temür to intervene in his erratic management of the appanage, might have hidden Temür's true intentions to secure an uncontested transition of power after his death. See Binbaş 2016, 177; Woods 1987, 92.

116. De Clavijo 2005, 86–87.

117. Manz 2007, 34.

118. Binbaş 2016, 175–79.

119. İ. E. Binbaş 2014, 278–79.

120. Binbaş 2016, 184.

121. Moin 2015.

122. Subtelny 1993, 14–23.

123. *Gūristān-i jahūdān.* Samarqandī 2007, 587.

124. Moin 2014, 105–24. For Shāhrukh's patronage of shrines (including sites related to *ahl al-bayt,* for example, in Mashhad), see Manz 2007, 219–21. On the Sufi master-disciple relationship in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and as "one of the primary mechanisms for channeling [spiritual and political] power in Persianate societies of Central Asia and Iran," see Bashir 2011, 13.

125. Moin 2015. Zeynep Oğuz Kursar explores a similar convergence of the cultivation of shrine veneration and "the ruler's divine image" in the case of the early Ottomans. See Kursar 2019, 67–88.

126. Moin 2012, 20.

127. Melvin-Koushki 2018, 354; Moin 2012; Babayan 2002.

128. Pfeiffer 1999, 45, 57n93; Blair 1986, 142.

EPILOGUE

1. Sela 2022, 79.

2. Rūzbihān Khunjī 1976, 22–28; Haarmann 2010.

3. Sela 2022, 79.

4. Kamola 2019, 112–15.

5. Rūzbihān Khunjī 1976, 29.

6. It is possible that the specific "treatise" Khunjī referred to in Rashīd al-Dīn's collected works is his *History of the Children of Isrāʾīl* rather than one of his theological-philosophical treatises. On the vizier's interpretation of the verse 57:4 in the chapter, see Pfeiffer 2019, 34–38.

7. Rūzbihān Khunjī 1976, 29–31.

8. Rashīd al-Dīn also played a significant role as a the "great mythologizer" of the lineages and origins of the Mongols and Turks in early modern Central Asia and India, and thus in the "union" of Turkic-Mongol genealogies and Persianate universal histories: see Sela 2013; Kia 2020, 126–27.

9. Fischel 1952, 47.

10. On the Timurids as philosopher-kings (especially Iskandar Sultan, r. 1409–14), see Melvin-Koushki 2018.

11. Balabanlilar 2012.

12. Moin 2012, 145–46, 152.

13. Ibid., 151.

14. Alam and Subrahmanyam 2009; Lefèvre 2012; Truschke 2015.

15. Rezavi 2008.

16. Moin 2012, 139–40, 149.

17. Eaton 2011.

18. Moin 2012, 201–4.

19. Alam and Subrahmanyam 2009, 469; Lefèvre 2012, 258–59.

20. Jahāngīr also claimed to have a more profound understanding of the Christian faith than the Jesuits. See Alam and Subrahmanyam 2009, 483–84.

21. For example, see Rashīd al-Dīn 2008, 393–99.

22. Moin 2012, 151.

23. Another short treatise is devoted entirely to the Ilkhan Öljeitü's wise statements and includes several of his dream narratives. See Raḥīmlū 1973.

24. Alam and Subrahmanyam 2009, 487–88.

25. Such as the *Taẕkira* of Shah Tahmasp: see Babayan 2002, 295–348. On the post-Mongol formation of self-legitimating rulership, see Crossley and Garthwaite 2016, 293–307.

26. Moin 2012, 142, 152, 200.

27. Truschke 2015, 17–18. This is further evinced in Akbar's sun veneration, which draw on the sun's visible and translatable qualities. See Truschke 2016b, 4.

28. Moin 2022, 721–48.

29. Casale 2022, 840–69.

30. Brack 2018; Brack 2019b.

31. For example, Humayun's test in Shah Tahmasp's court. See Moin 2012, 126.

32. Moin 2014.

33. Broadbridge 2008, 174–87; Burak 2013. These modes of sacral kingship remained "alive" in Central Asia well into the nineteenth century. See Pickett 2020, 220–21.

34. Subrahmanyam 1997; Subrahmanyam 2003.

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